

VOL.1.NO.1. • JAN - FEB 1992 • RS.9



# SANSKRIT DRAMA

- KUTHA TAM
- CHALLENGES OF FREEDOM
- MYTH OF PROGRESS AND DEVELOPMENT





*Krishna milking a cow. Bhagvata Purana.  
10.3" by 7.4" National Museum, New Delhi.*

#### INDIAN YELLOW

*The pigment, Indian Yellow on the cover was produced in India from the 15th to early 20th Century. It was probably introduced into India from Persia.*

*Derived from the urine of cows that had been fed on mango leaves, the pigment was used mainly for watercolour and tempera painting. Its principal constituent is the Calcium or Magnesium salts of Euxanthic Acid.*

*Certain sects of gwalas (milkmen), despised by other Indians who kept dairy cattle, collected the urine in small earthen pots, cooled and concentrated it by heating over a fire to precipitate the pigment. After straining the liquid through a cloth, the gwalas made the sediment into rough solid lumps, dried them over a charcoal fire and then in the sun. The pigment was then sold in this crude form to local merchants. Its production was discontinued by the British government on humane grounds in 1908.*

*Since the cows were fed forcefully on mango leaves that made them sick.*

*The crude form was shipped to England, in the earlier days where it was prepared as an artists' colour, and, consequently, came to be regarded as an English speciality. Bouvier claimed to be one of the Continental artists who used it first.*

*Known in India as Purree, or Peori, (eg. Monghyr Peori & Hardwari Peori,) it yields a beautiful, deep and luminiscent golden yellow colour and was used extensively in Indian miniatures. Nowadays, this colour is produced synthetically.*

**-ANUPAM SAH-**

*Final Year student of Conservation  
at the National Museum, New Delhi*





Dear Friend,

Something grim is happening, and we better look it squarely in the face. There is no place in today's world for traditional cultures. Land and societies that have flourished for thousands of years are getting decimated at a rate which is giddy paced and irretrievable. Ancient wisdoms are flung away with impunity into the trash heap to decay like so much rubbish into oblivion. Man was meant to rule over the machine, but what is happening now is really quite the opposite. We are slowly, yet surely becoming faceless clones of the Gods of mad modernity.

We have to question two attitudes. One, that of our abject somnolence and two, of our servitude to any modern definition of 'progress' that is propagated as today's world view. The next question is, do we have any role to play in this whole scenario?

The answer is yes. And one way we can do it is through a medium that has stood the test of time, namely, through the written word.

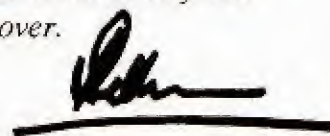
And that is exactly what we want to call this magazine, **a written-word-movement**, where we invite the young adult to participate. Indeed, we call upon all concerned citizens of the world irrespective of age, to give of themselves, in whatever manner, to make this movement possible. Through it, let us activate our thinking process, explore the best facets of our arts and heritage, examine current role models of development, talk unashamedly of the sacred, understand our literature, value systems, in short, work towards a resurgence of body and mind.

Youth is a serious power to contend with, and no one knows this fact better than our systems of governance. Tiananmen Square is a powerful example. Apart from a few voluntary bodies, all other youth organisations are highly politicised and manipulated for vested interests. The age of franchise having been lowered to eighteen years has brought party politics into the campus. But who really takes responsibility for our growth as thinking citizens of the country? Not our jobs, for they make machines out of us. Not our parents for their children have to win the rat race. Not society who labels thinkers as 'freaks'. Not the campus syllabus for it bows to the Examination God. In short, our development processes have taken over our minds leaving us with no 'alternate' thoughts.

The written-word-movement places a few of these 'alternate' thoughts to young people.

Our quest in this magazine is to seek the wholeness of things. It is an attempt to descend from the realm of the abstract into the translation of it. It is a quest for a complete rootedness in our identity in a world which has only one role model-the "developed" world.

Let us bear no shame in being idealistic, no shame in having simple convictions as opposed to lofty and often incomprehensible intellectualism which seeks a way out through the information glut of today, a body-mind corporate takeover.







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**THE EYE,**  
143, Golf Links,  
II Floor,  
New Delhi-110 003  
**Designed and**  
**produced by**  
Roots Advertising  
Services Pvt.Ltd.  
B4/66 Safdarjung  
Enclave,  
New Delhi - 110 029  
**Printed at**  
Kaycee Printers,  
B-177/2, Okhla  
Industrial Area,  
Phase-1,  
New Delhi - 110 020

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### FOREIGN RATES

INDIVIDUAL ANNUAL SUBSCRIPTIONS (US \$20/£ 15)
INSTITUTIONAL SUBSCRIPTIONS (US \$ 20/£ 15)

Please add the additional sum of Rs.5/- if you send an outstation cheque as encashment charges. Payment can be made by cheques and drafts in favour of SPIC-MACAY PUBLICATIONS. Send to: 143, Golf Links, New Delhi - 110 003. Tel. 611023.



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## HOW IT ALL BEGAN...

**T**he idea of this magazine was born five months ago. Reactions were mixed. Yet another magazine, people groaned. Isin't there a magazine glut in the market? We had to contend that this was so. And, this was hardly what you would call a 'popular' magazine. No Madonna centrespread. Or M.C. Hammer's album billing. Or an expose of Pooja Bedi's private life. Not even some juicy politics or gossip. So then, who was going to read it? The young adult, we chorused. But, you must be crazy. The young adult has no time to read. And this 'heavy' stuff, forget it. He has to study hard and then he gets so tired that he prefers to watch Rocky 111 on video. We had to contend that this was so. And how could you even think of a new magazine when there is no money around and the cost of newsprint has soared? You will crash. Flat on your face. We had to contend that this was so.

Moral of the story—all odds are against us. Except you,

## AND A FEW OTHERS...

**S**ome said it's a real good idea. Spic Macay has grown so much over the last fourteen years and has a large network of chapters. These chapters have thinking people in them and will help support the magazine. And some others said, we don't have a forum for young people to write serious and quality stuff. This magazine could be such a forum. Most magazines are either too news oriented, academic or specialised. There is too much information around and too little inspiration. And then there was the overwhelming goodwill from supporters.

## SUCH AS.....

**A**rjun and Kiran Malhotra and Col. and Mrs. Malhotra who provided us with some fundamental infrastructure without which we couldn't even have started. Sujata Pandey who came to see us one day and decided to throw in her lot with us. Our old friend, Rustam Vania who is our illustrator and a sort of in-house designer. Sujasha who illustrated for us. Eminent persons in various fields who wholeheartedly endorsed the idea and are writing for us without any remuneration. Our magazine co-ordinators and chapter heads of Spic Macay who have sent in pre-issue subscriptions. Lalit Nirula who gave us a little present and lots of support. Our other friends all over India and abroad for their moral and monetary support. Malcolm Baldwin for his very sincere help. Our young writers who sent in their inspired contributions. And finally our volunteers and core group members of Spic Macay, Delhi for their invaluable assistance.

*Our sincere thanks to each and everyone who has helped us in any way.  
Our heartfelt gratitude to our senior writers, without whose wisdom the pages  
of our magazine would have been that much poorer.  
Thank you all and help us to continue.*



As he climbed on to the stage, his seventy odd years showed in his slight unsteadiness. A little gingerly, he seated himself on the stool and stared into the lamplight. Slowly, mesmerisingly, his green eyes began to flicker with a different fire and his whole face was aflame - meet Ravana - wise man, emperor, demon, fool.

He did not just show us Ravana - he *was* Ravana. Everything, from the confident stance of his shoulders to the smooth control of his gestures, bespoke a man used to authority - powerful man, victor, ruler. And yet, even as we watched, this Ravana, in all his grandeur was torn down from these heights by a mere, maddened monkey. As Hanuman set fire to his beloved Lanka, we saw a different Ravana, a mourner, tragic and defeated.

And then suddenly himself, with a snarl, he is transformed yet again. As Ravana revives and swears wild, angry vengeance against the destroyer of his city, his face is contorted with a terrible rage. Fissures of pure fury crease his face as the demon - king roars for a terrible revenge.

It was a breathtaking performance. Every nuance of feeling was there. Multiple shades of meaning... it was brilliant, beautiful, incredible...

#### **The problem**

And it left the audience cold... As I watched people leaving the hall, I saw how their numbers had dwindled, how those that remained wore that look of pained politeness which comes from a complete lack of comprehension.

Thinking back upon the whole scenario, from the bril-



# KUTTIYATTAM

SAFINA UBEROI

*Safina Uberoi went on a SPIC - MACAY Gurukul Scholarship to live with Guru Ammannur Madhava Chakyar, in Irinjalakuda, a little town in Kerala. She came away greatly inspired and motivated enough to want to make a detailed documentary film on Kutiyattam.*

liant performance to the largely blank - faced audience, it seemed to epitomise

the whole problem of the revival of so many of our classical arts. Sporadic attempts

may be made to expose more people to Kutiyattam, but what is not appreciated so



keenly is the need to *explain* it. The very elements which make Kutiyattam unique, namely, a high degree of stylization, great detail and subtlety have become a barrier which prevents its general popularity.

Modern audiences are not the carefully cultivated '*rasiks*' of yesteryears. Our whole expectation of what a performance should be has changed. Kutiyattam has not. We want a fast-paced encapsulation of events, but Kutiyattam offers us six hours of detailed exploration. We want instant entertainment, but Kutiyattam demands educated understanding. Kutiyattam is an art-form which stressed the complementarity of intellectual content and aesthetic form. This makes it especially dependent on the audience's critical appreciation to provide it with a meaningful context. Without an audience equipped to decode its complex symbolism, caught in the spotlights of a modern stage, Kutiyattam is rendered impotent.

#### Introduction

As a performing art, Kutiyattam has the same delight in nuance and hidden shades of meaning in metaphors and delicate implications which is the hallmark of so much of Sanskrit literature. This association has led scholars to claim for it, a history of 2000 years. Although the veracity of this claim is difficult to prove, certainly by the 9th to 10th centuries A.D., we have clear evidence of efforts to reform Kutiyattam by one king, Kulasekhara Varman. Such reform presupposes a long-standing tradition. Epigraphical and literary



sources thus give Kutiyattam a continuous history of at least 1000 years which makes Kutiyattam the oldest surviving form of Sanskrit theatre.

Yet this does not mean that Kutiyattam has remained frozen for millenia. On the contrary, it has always contained a duality where tradition and contemporaneity interact to produce a multifaceted art. While Kutiyattam's Aryan origins have been

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preserved, with change seen as sacrilege, it has simultaneously adapted to regional tastes until Kutiyattam has been assimilated as a supremely Keralite art.

This ability to reconcile opposing trends in typically Indian fashion is symptomatic of Kutiyattam's development.

Firstly, as we have seen, Kutiyattam has been both faithful to the Sanskritic concept of theatre and also adapted to regional requirements.

Secondly, Kutiyattam's form represents this blend through the interplay of ritual and rehearsed elements with improvisational tech-



niques. While traditional precepts are sacred, independent interpretation of the text is also the stamp of a great Kutiyattam actor.

Finally, Kutiyattam's social development was perhaps instrumental in the two creating this peculiar combination. Here we find the meeting of two world views, the patriarchal and the matrilineal. The Chakyars are the male actors, and are the chief custodians of the art and tend to dominate it. But, unlike most classical dramatic forms (even until recently in the West), they share the stage with women. These are the Nangyars, women of matrilineal households, who hold key positions in Kutiyattam along with their men folk, the Nambiars. While the Chakyars are said to be of Aryan origin, and therefore probably carriers of Sanskrit learning, the Nangyars are local and their inclusion represents a harmonious fusion between two distinct cultures.

#### **A Short Study**

**K**utiyattam operates within strict religious and ritualistic boundaries whose nature is defined by their Vedic/Sanskritic origins. It is performed in the temple precincts, usually in a specially designed theatre, called, the *kuttambalam*. (literally Temple Theatre). The Chakyars themselves belong to the *ambalavasi* or temple-dweller caste and are the elite among a whole host of temple servants. The Chakyar performs before a lamp, lit with three wicks, symbolising the Hindu trinity. The whole drama takes the form of a sacrificial offering to the diety. As a symbolic acceptance of this gift, the door to the inner sanctum sanctorum remains open during the performances and



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helps to underline the Chakyar's importance as the interpreter of his role. The nature of the stories helps to delineate and explore the character to a degree unusual in Indian theatre.

The missing element in this dance-drama is speech. Interestingly, this is introduced not by the Sanskrit of the play proper but usually by the largely Malayalam prose of the *Vidushaka*.

The *vidushaka* is supposed to have been introduced by Tolan, The Brahmin minister to King Kulashchekara Varman (9th to 10th century A.D.) As interpreter of the play, the *Vidushaka* helps to explain the esoteric Sanskrit passages in every day Malayalam. This emphasis on direct interaction with the audience prevented Kutiyattam from stagnating into a purely abstract form.

The plays themselves are in Sanskrit, mostly religious and based on the epics. The most popular are not those of Kalidas or Harsha but the plays by Bhasa, possibly of southern origin himself.

The initial invocatory rituals are followed by the *pu-rappudu* or preliminaries which the actor performs behind a curtain and involves certain abstract cadences of movement. Traditionally, the first day's performance could end with these movements without the audience seeing any 'acting' at all.

The next phase is the *nirvahana*. Unlike the previous ritualistic elements whose semi-magical significance is of Vedic - Sanskrit origin, this practice is unique to Kutiyattam and possibly a largely regional evolution. In this *nirvahana*, the character introduces himself by presenting his personal history, including perhaps, his past life. The actor has almost full freedom to choose which legends associated with the character he wishes to emphasise. This choice



The text of these plays serves only as a nucleus, with the actor augmenting the text and building upon its structure with a whole host of real and fantastic associations. Although the text of the play is considered "sacred", the play is often "frozen" while the actor goes far beyond its superficial limits to explore a whole range of emotive possibilities. This is done through what can only be described as a sophisticated form of *minimal theatre* where the actors' face and body become the stage on which the play is enacted.

To be successful in this, the actor must be well-versed in what the *Natyashastra* describes as the four main *abhinayas*: *angika*, *satvika*, *vachika* and *aharya abhinaya*. *Angika abhinaya* refers to the use of the body and here, Kutiyattam especially emphasises hand gestures and facial movements through the use of a stylized, highly evolved mime language. To this is added the subtle essence of *satvika abhinaya* which involves the actors' inner identification with the character and which according to the *Natyashastra* are marked by involuntary physical reactions of tears, perspiration and hallucinations!

This use of non-verbal action is interwoven with *vachika abhinaya* or the use of the voice. The plays

may be in prose and verse, in Sanskrit or in Prakrit and a semi-vedic chant is used in recitation. The accompaniment is chiefly by the *mizhavu* drums played by the *Nambiars* who sit at the rear of the stage. These huge drums not only set the mood for the play and heighten its drama, but also keep its *tala* (time) and have great symbolic significance. To the left of the stage, a *Nangyar* may also sing the chief verses and accompany the *Chakyar* with cymbals.



*It seems tragic that an art form so refined, produced by a highly developed scholastic and artistic tradition seems so near extinction. Embodied for the last few decades in three great gurus - Parameshwar Chakyar, Mani Madhava Chakyar and Ammannur Madhava Chakyar, it seems quite literally likely to die with the last of them.....*



All these techniques help to explore each character's inner complexities. An outward, visual depiction of these qualities is made with the use of *aharya abhinaya* or make up. Each element of the make up from the ritual of application to the symbolic use of colour is carefully calculated not only for effect but as an intellectual statement. For example, while black represents 'evil' and *paccha* or green roughly translates as 'good', the make up of most characters contain both - only the proportions vary! What emerges are not the black and white caricatures so common to much of our theatre but characters whose internal variations are reflected in the many coloured splendour of their masks.

Many of these elements of Kutiyattam, from *mudras* to make up, have been adopted by Kathakali, a form which emerged from Kutiyattam, emphasising dance and music somewhat at the expense of detailed acting. Kathakali also accommodated pace and spectacle as ingredients of popularity to a greater degree than Kutiyattam. It also gave Malayalam precedence over Sanskrit and this vernacularization helped broaden its audience. Today Kathakali



is performed all over India while its parent form languishes near the back waters of Kerala...

However, in pure refinement of *abhinaya*, Kutiyattam remains quite unparalleled. A Kutiyattam actor can take a single verse and spend several hours executing it! This stress on elaboration prevents the staging of a complete play (the whole of the Ramayana would take 365 nights). Instead, specific acts of plays, often with

*The stress on elaboration prevents the staging of a complete play. The whole of the Ramayana would take 365 nights.*

names and identities of their own are chosen. Even the full exposition of the relatively short acts takes many nights.

Each verse of the play is interpreted three fold. First it is recited and broadly rendered in *abhinaya*. Then it is chanted slowly with each word - meaning elaborated in greater detail. Finally, there follows longer, freer improvisation based on key words and ideas. Much of this tradition has been exposed and preserved through 'manuals' on the plays written by great Chakyar gurus. These are the *Attaparakarams* and *Kramadipikas*, which cover both acting techniques and also discuss the philosophical and metaphysical implications of the play. But, through the use of free Malayalam prose, great Kutiyattam performers were able to

make these abstractions have immediate relevance for their audience, the theatre became a space not only for spectacle, but also for introspection.

This elaborate encoding means that Kutiyattam places great emphasis on the audience's ability to interpret it intelligently. Today, it is easy to dismiss Kutiyattam's minutiae of expression as obscure, its detail as obsessive and its finesse as elitist. Yet, there was a time when every gesture of the actor was of deep significance for the audience and in the jesting of the Vidushaka they recognised a penetrating caricature of themselves.

### Conclusion

**T**his is what makes Kutiyattam so wonderful. While its plays are peopled by the godly, their portrayal is profoundly human. Kutiyattam explores our innermost dilemmas with a depth that gives it universal significance.

It seems tragic that an art form so refined, produced by a highly developed scholastic and artistic tradition seems so near extinction. Embodied for the last few decades in three great gurus - Parameshwar Chakyar, Mani Madhava Chakyar and Ammannur Madhava Chakyar, it seems quite literally likely to die with the last of them.....

At such a juncture, 'preservation' is an easy catch phrase, but does its power lie in logic or in its emotive appeal? If Kutiyattam is declining, doesn't this imply that it has lost its relevance? If the social milieu which produced it no longer values it, is preservation still valid? Must Kutiyattam be frozen and presented like a museum piece in the halls of a westernized middle class search-

ing for roots and self respect in ethnicity?

Perhaps the solution is at least partly contained within the problem. It is not enough for the Chakyars to move out of the temple and into modern auditoriums, we must meet them half way.

Audiences should not only see Kutiyattam, they should be helped to understand it. When an art form changes its context, to avoid being merely petrified and retain its innovative vigour, it needs to renew itself and remain relevant. Kutiyattam must speak to the audiences of today. It must find some way of reaching out to the 'real lives' of the audience without corrupting its own reality. One thousand years ago it still had the vitality to adapt. Five hundred years ago it gave birth to Kathakali. And now again it is time for a new stage of its evolution.

Perhaps what we need is another 'middleman', someone, who like the old Vidushaka will help to interpret Kutiyattam for our urban audiences.

Any volunteers?...

*Safina Uberoi now works in the National School of Drama, New Delhi on a project called "Theatre in Education".*

*All the photographs were taken by Safina during her stay at Irinjalakuda.*



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**Margi, Valiyashala,**  
Trivandrum, Kerala.



# NOT JUST A STORY... WHAT A CHUCK...YAAR!

— RUKMINI SEKHAR —

## *A stone that hit and didn't hit*

**A**mmannur Parameshwar Chakyar.....there was no one quite as stunning as he when he appeared stage - attired and strode on to the wooden platform and took his place in front of the tall oil lamp. The whole *kuttambalam* was filled with his presence. He lived in a Kerala - green, sleepy little town called, Muzhikulam. But the princes, lords and wealthy men of Travancore, Cochin and Malabar frequently invited him to their urban fiefdoms to see him perform Kutiyattam. (Ancient Sanskrit Theatre). King Martanda Varma of Travancore was his benefactor and patron.

Martanda Varma lived in his Poojapura palace in Triuvananthapuram (Trivandrum) those days and it was a daily ritual to hold Kathakali performances there which the king attended personally. One day, he found himself seated next to the Chakyar watching a play performed by some palace artists. After seeing the bit about Ravana's description of Mount Kailash, His Highness leaned towards the Chakyar and whispered, "What do you say, Chakyar, was it good?"

Parameshwara Chakyar, with a twinkle in his eyes, and great diplomacy, replied, "Not bad, Sir. But somehow, I had always imagined Kailash to be a bit....well....bigger". He said it all without saying anything and the topic was closed.

But the King wouldn't give up that easily. He summoned the Chakyar to his palace in the afternoon and told him with a subtle smile,

"Chakyar, how would you like to do the same play we saw yesterday? I'm quite sure you would make a delightful Ravana! Would you like to start now?"

Needless to say, the Chakyar was

quite startled by this odd request at this odd time of day. Did His Highness think that he, the maestro, could dance just like that, even without his costume? But wait.... the King must have a purpose.....of testing him about what he said yesterday. So he thinks he can catch me out, is it? I will oblige him.

So, tucking his top dhoti into his waistband and with a final determined chew at his betel leaf and taking a deep breath, invoking his deity, the Chakyar put all that he had into his acting. And then it came to the depiction of Mount Kailash.

*So, tucking his top dhoti into his waistband and with a final determined chew at his betel leaf and taking a deep breath, invoking his deity, the Chakyar put all that he had into his acting.*

Not a sound in the hall. Suddenly, an old lady declared in a stunned screech, "Ambambo! Is Kailash so huge? Yesterday when I saw the Kathakali play, I thought it was only as big as our Veli hill!"

The Chakyar bowed and received a gold ring from Martanda Varma.

If there was such a thing called a 'visiting professor' in those days, I

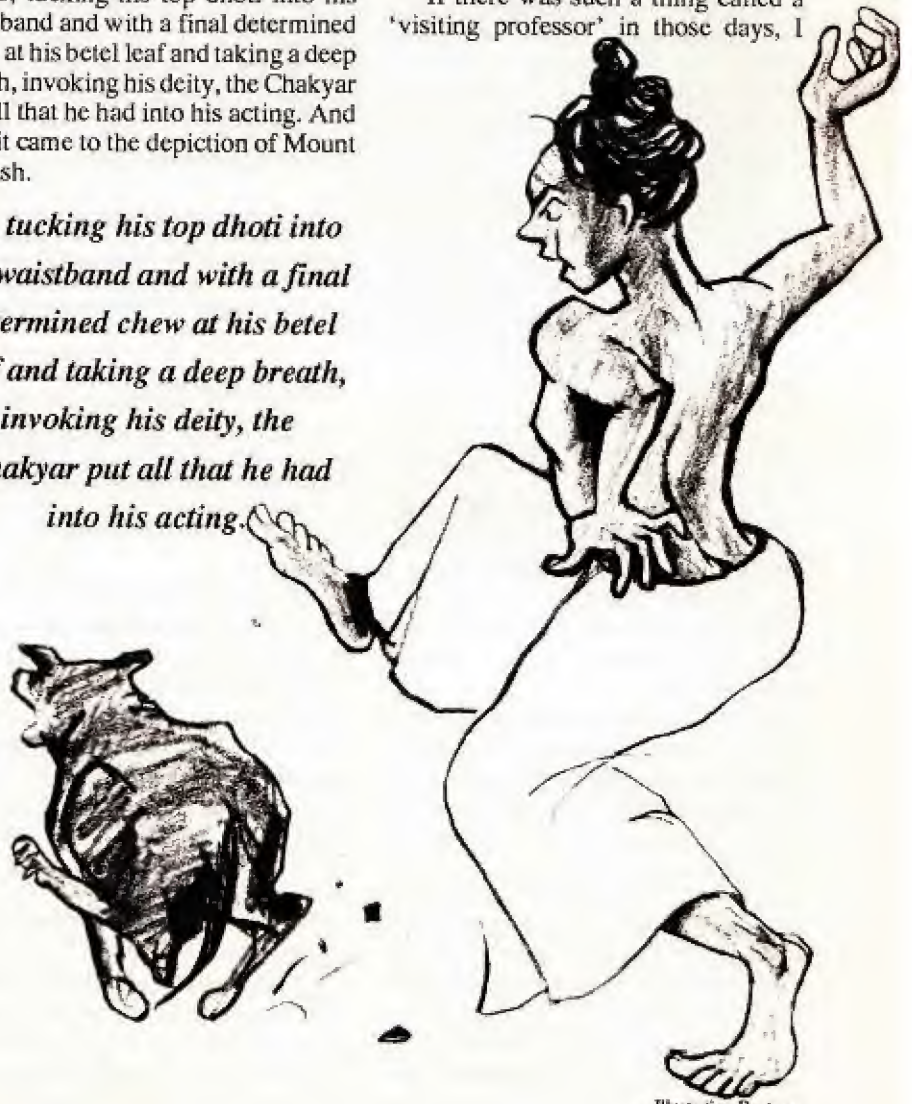


Illustration: Rustam



suppose the Chakyar would have qualified as one. He visited Triuvananthapuram every now and then at the Maharaja's orders, to teach the students of that city. One evening, at the end of a scorching summer day, the Chakyar went to the beach to stroll and take in the sea breeze. But what a crowd was there! So many people, even the Resident Englishman and his wife. And their dog.

Now, this dog was not quite like the small, vegetarian dogs of Muzhikulam. You could frighten them away with a frown and they understood Malayalam, so that was easy. But, this one... he was like a lion, and what's more, as the story went, bit when ordered. He shuffled over to where the Chakyar was sitting, contemplating a verse of his new play. He was feeling cool and relaxed. Suddenly, a cold nose nuzzled against his bare arm, and the Chakyar was face to face with a huge canine. Not knowing what to do, he flung his arms around and shouted, rather inanely, "dog! dog!" His muslin top dhoti flapped in the wind. He felt his end was imminent.

The Resident and his wife found this picture before them very funny and they stood at a distance, laughing. Seeing that they were not calling away their dog, the Chakyar bent down, pretended to pick up a stone and aimed it at the dog. It yelped with pain, put its tail between its legs and limped away.

The Resident was furious. "Who threw the stone at my dog? I'll see that he gets his due!"

"It's him", pointed out another visitor to the beach. "He's here, visiting at the behest of the King. He's a Chakyar."

"The King, is it?" roared the Resident. "That's where I'll go then".

And he stomped off to see Martanda Varma.

The Resident couple brought the King up to date about the whole issue stressing on the deep trauma that their dog was subjected to at the hands of some silly actor, who was here at His Highness's own orders.

"But, I didn't throw the stone, I only pretended to, Sir", explained the Chakyar who was summoned to the royal presence. He was still quite shaken by the dog episode.

"Pretended indeed! How will you explain away the fact that the dog was hurt and how did it react in pain?" snapped the



Illustration: Rustam

*Spotted him sitting in the corner of the room on a brass stool, delicately slicing a betel nut with a nutcracker, spreading the pieces on a betel leaf, lacing the leaf with lime and then with a deft flick of his hand tucking the assembled unit into the side of his mouth, where it bulged on the left side of his face.*

Resident.

Martanda Varma foresaw a long and arduous debate ahead of him. He asked the Chakyar, whether there was any solution in the near horizon.

"I suppose so", said the Chakyar and bent down and tried to dislodge a huge stone door-stopper. With a practised motion he aimed the stone with all his might at the Resident. The Englishman fell down unconscious and his wife gasped with shock.

"Oh my God! Get some water, quick! Is there a doctor nearby?"

The water came and it was splashed all over the man's face. Soon he stirred, and gradually came to. He lifted his right hand gingerly and patted the right side of his head and was relieved to

find it still intact. But, may be, the left side is gone, and I'm much too numb to feel anything. Actually he'd forgotten where exactly the stone had hit him. He had seen it hurtling towards him like a meteor and passed out.

Now, realising that he was still alive, he looked around for the perpetrator of the crime. And spotted him sitting in the corner of the room on a brass stool, delicately slicing a betel nut with a nutcracker, spreading the pieces on a betel leaf, lacing the leaf with lime and then with a deft flick of his hand tucking the assembled unit into the side of his mouth, where it bulged on the left side of his face. Hastily, the Resident scanned the room. He found the stone lying exactly where it was, propped up against the door. What's more, he realized that no human being could have picked up the stone with one hand and thrown it as deftly as the Chakyar did. It was an enormous stone!

What a consummate actor! The dog howled in pain and I fell unconscious! And no stone left his hands! What perfection and what practice!

This Chakyar was a legend. His reputation for versatility and subtlety of expression long outlived him. Even today, his aura permeates the house of his descendants which stands near a palm-fringed pond, in a little town called Irinjalakuda. Close by, a little oil lamp flickers in front of their family deity when the twilight settles and the cow bells are silent.



# KUTIYATTAM AND NOH

## A SACRED SIMILARITY



While the performers put on make up and costume they let themselves be possessed by their roles.

### Similar yet different

**K**utiyattam and Noh, the two traditional forms of theatre surviving in India and Japan, respectively belong to the general framework of the oriental aesthetic principle, which regards drama as a combination of poetry, music, dance and mime, but in spite of this broad and apparent similarity, their features and acting methods are quite distinct from each other, because they are firmly rooted to their own cultures. While Kutiyattam (which is the enactment of Sanskrit plays), is believed to have an antiquity of about two thousand years, Noh seems to have evolved from minor entertainments, like *Okina* and proto-dramatic forms like *Dengaku* and *Sarugaku*, before it was codified and remodelled into its existing form by Kan'ami and Zeami, two seminal theatre artists, sometime in the fourteenth

SUDHA GOPALAKRISHNAN

*Noh and Kutiyattam as two major theatric forms of Asia have a common aesthetic philosophy in that they are not solely concerned with life as it is lived here and now, by human beings limited to worldly space and time - they have a macroscopic scope.*

century. Apart from their insistence on classicism and stylization, there is a unifying and driving force of spiritualism pervading these arts, which make them, "worthy of the Gods themselves".

### Religious ritual of both art forms

**O**n a comparative analysis of Kutiyattam and Noh, it may be seen that these theatrical forms have been much more than mere entertainment, because they are inextricably connected with worship and religious ritual. Tracing the evolution of Noh as an art form, Jacob Raz records that "the first of the five types of Noh, *Waki Noh* and *Okina* were (and still are) performed as pure religious ritual, never to be performed by a polluted actor...*Sarugaku* was performed as an act to save a man's life. *Bengaku*, too had been connected with the Kasuga Shrine at Nara for several centuries". Kutiyattam too is a temple art form, performed by the members of traditional families of actors called *Chakyars*, in temple theatres called *kuttambalams*. The play, which was confined to the precincts of the temple, had a religious sanctity about



it; thus religiosity and the concept of the sacred run as a common thread in these art forms, connecting every aspect from its aesthetic theory, content and acting methods, to physical details like stage-setting, costume and make-up.

#### Far Above Reality

**N**oh and Kutiyattam, as two major theatrical forms of Asia have a common aesthetic philosophy in that they are not solely concerned with life as it is lived here and now, by human beings limited to worldly space and time - they have a macroscopic scope. Accordingly, 'reality' is seen from a different perspective, which enables the actors and the audience to transcend the boundaries of the world in their experience of the performance. This is the highest level in the experience of all arts, which Indian texts on aesthetics call by the term *rasa*, and Noh experts describe as *hana*. According to Indian aesthetic theory, *rasa* is "the summit of delight, which appears wondrous, for it sets free (for a while) from the limitations of space-time and you-and-I, and is untroubled by the pressures of life and by apprehension or desire....the experience is, on the whole, one of undivided repose and tranquility". Perhaps it is for this blissful quality of artistic experience that it has been compared to mystical experience (*brahmanandasahodara* - akin to a delight through the perception of the Absolute Principle). Noh plays in performance are quintessentially a practical illustration of the doctrine of Zen Buddhism, which teaches that the world perceived by our senses is only a deceptive mask, concealing the inner truth. The transitory nature of the world and the discrepancy between the apparent and the real are the themes of many Noh plays, which are aimed at inducing contemplation and

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Once a Noh Actor puts on his mask, his whole body and soul seems to take on the character he represents.



evoking the boundlessness of the Zen spirit.

#### Plots of both forms

**T**he basic plots of Kutiyattam and Noh are derived from the myths and classical legends belonging to their respective regions. The repertoire of Kutiyattam includes the celebrated plays of Bhasa, Kalidasa, Harsha, Kulashekhar and Shaktibhadra. Some of the popular plays are, Bhasa's *Abhisheka Natakam*, *Pratima Natakam*, *Pratijnayangandharayana*, Harsha's *Nagananda*, Shaktibhadra's *Ashchar-*

*yachudamani*, Kulashekhar's *Subhadra Dhanamjaya* and *Tapati Samvarana*. Noh dramatists also drew their plots from a vast variety of literary sources from ancient times to the early Muromachi period. These include mythical tales and classical Chinese and Japanese literature, some of which are *Ise Monogatari* (Tale of Ise), *Yamato*

*Monogatari* (Tale of Yamato) and *Soga Monogatari* (Tale of Soga Brothers). Several plays have an essentially Buddhist theme, and there are copious references to Buddhism and Shintoism in the texts. In Kutiyattam, acts from plays are treated as full-fledged dramas, and are subjected to an elaborate method of acting, sometimes the action taking several days to complete a segment, whereas, in Noh, as many as five plays are presented in the course of a single day's programme! Zeami who codified the aesthetic theory and performance principles of Noh, wrote elaborate treatises on the art - form, giving a detailed analysis of the composition, direction, production and action of Noh. These treatises, nine in number (apart from a few works on music, which have also been ascribed to Zeami), are unique documents, throwing light on the evolution and early development of Noh on the one hand, and different aspects of its theatrical craft on the other.



The staging of Kutiyattam is based on theatre manuals called *Kramadeepika* and *Attaprakaram*, which have been handed down by old masters of the art form: *Kramadeepika* deals with physical aspects like, stage management, costume, fees for actors etc., while *Attaprakaram* describes the details of acting.

#### Theatre as Sacred

**T**o translate the concept of spirituality in theatre and preserve them through vast stretches of time, Kutiyattam and Noh

insisted on a strict adherence to tradition, and deemed the process of theatrical activity itself as sacred. This may be seen in every sphere of these theatre arts, from the vigorous system of training and physical details like make-up and stage-setting, to the act of performance on the stage. Both Kutiyattam and Noh begin with a formal system of training, transmitted from master to disciple through generations, in which

the actor acquires and develops his skill through long years of disciplined study under the master. On this point, Yasuo Nakamura observes that according to Zeami, "after the long period of strict training, the art must become one with the body and soul of the actor. Even after this has been achieved, he must continue to practice and rehearse all his life. In this way only can he hope to attain the deeper realism of the art." Accordingly, the actor's day starts early in the morning with practice, accompanied only by the spirits of his ancestors. Learning, which begins roughly at the age of seven, is a continuous process, and stops only with death. An actor's life, as ordained by Zeami, should be austere and unblemished. He divides an actor's life according to his age, and also into nine levels, according to the heights to which he can rise in his artistic expression. In Kutiyattam also, the master-disciple (guru-shishya) relationship is deemed holy

and sacred. Right from the day of his initiation, the student imbibes the secrets of the art through vigorous training, direct supervision and encouragement from his master. This discipline, combined with his own innate skill, study of classical texts and creative imagination, makes him a true artist.

#### The abstract as symbols

**T**he spiritual symbolism that pervades these arts manifests in the stage-setting; they avoid a realistic stage because their scope is much wider than what can be

positioned back-stage. Strips of tender coconut leaves, bunches of coconut flowers and trunks of the plantain tree (with fruit) adorn the stage. There is also a conventional *nirapara* (vessel filled with paddy) and a lighted lamp with three wicks on the frontstage.

Electric lights are avoided. Change in scenery and other details are presented not through any change in stage setting, but through the elaborate histrionic action of the actor.

As in the case of the *kuttampalam*, Noh stages have also been traditionally

part of shrines. A typical Noh stage is 18 feet square. There is a bridge which separates the green room from the stage. The chorus and orchestra are on the recess, to the left and back respectively. The roof of the stage imitates a Shinto shrine. The stage decor is limited to a pine tree painted on the rear wall, a formalized bamboo pattern near the chorus door and three miniature pine trees along the bridge.

Perhaps the bridge stands for a passage from life to the world of dreams, transporting the spectator to higher levels of existence through the experience of the art. The pine and the bamboo are also highly suggestive symbols that illumine the essence of Zen philosophy. The oil lamp in Kutiyattam indicates a divine presence (*Sakshi*) on the stage, witnessing the performance, which is meant as a votive offering.

The transformation of the actor into the character is an inward journey from the temporal to the transcendent, material to the spiritual and realistic to the sacred. Irinjalakkuda Madhava Chakyar compares drama to a religious ritual. The Chakyar, after purificatory ablutions, enters the green room and ties a red cloth on his head, which signifies his identification with the character he represents. From that moment, till such time as he unties the cloth after the performance, he is not supposed to be affected by worldly ties. While he puts



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represented in 'actual' terms. The stage-floor of a typical *kuttampalam* is half-a-metre above the auditorium. There are about four ornamental columns supporting the roof which has a carved ceiling. Two *mizhavus* (big drums) are



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on make-up and costume, he lets himself be possessed by his role.

Similar is perhaps the case with Noh. In Noh, masks are used for the role of the main character, and they are invested with sacred associations. According to Zemmario Toki, "Masks are considered sacred by Noh actors, and a masked actor is supposed to be a

living embodiment of the qualities he is called upon to represent. Once a Noh actor puts on his mask, his whole body and soul seems to take on the character of the personage he represents." After fixing the mask on his face, as in Kutiyattam, the actor looks into a mirror, to familiarize himself with the character and identify himself with the role.

In theatre, the narrative, lyrical and dramatic modes are exploited to the fullest extent, but the action in Noh and Kutiyattam follow divergent routes. In the latter, the actor orally recites the text of the play, and elaborates it histrionically, to analyse the multiple layers of meaning embedded in the text, through dance movements, a symbolic code of gestures and facial expressions. During the course of his action, he unravels each shade and interpretation of meaning, and the acting reaches unbelievable heights in his detailed enactment of the dramatic situation. In Noh, there is a total regulation of external expression, and complete control of detail. The action is condensed and minimalised. For instance, on the stage, a long journey is indicated by a walk on

the stage, or sometimes by a single step forward. Thus the play works more by suggestion, through "an inner force that connects all arts through an intensity of the mind."

In the non-illusionistic and make-believe world of Kutiyattam and Noh, Gods, demons and humans interact with each other, without any break in dramatic credibility, because the function of drama in these arts is not the representation of the actual, but the revelation of the metaphysical, which transcends the senses and reaches out to world beyond. ●

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# WHY SANSKRIT AND WHAT HAPPENED TO IT ?

SUSHILA AMBIKE

आविश्वं तन्वाना भारतवर्षस्य संस्कृतेज्योतिः ।

विश्वस्य भूषणं सा संस्कृतवागेव मे शरणम् ॥

*My refuge is the Sanskrit language which has been spreading the brilliance of the culture of India throughout the world and which is truly an ornament of the universe.*

It is certainly a travesty of fortune that one has to pose the question, "Why Sanskrit", in order to emphasize the need for the propagation and perpetration of Sanskrit in our country. This was not the case even about fifty years ago. Sanskrit then, was considered to be as good, as useful and as worthy a subject of study as any other, and every well educated Indian was well versed with this language and its literature. The famous economist and eminent scholar, the late, Dr. C.D. Deshmukh was thoroughly conversant with Sanskrit literature and so was the late Dr. N.V. Gadgil, a freedom fighter, politician and a central minister in free India. Dr. Sarvepalli Radhakrishnan's stature as President of India was enriched by the fact that he read philosophy in Sanskrit. It is therefore, not an exaggeration to say that many who held public offices, like civil servants and the judiciary were well versed in Sanskrit. By no stretch of imagination can this be true of today's public servants, politicians and statesmen. At best Sanskrit has been reduced to the position of an antiquarian study confined to a few experts engaged in research work. But otherwise, for most of us in India, it has become an unexciting but sometimes an inevitable alternative in the school or university curriculum, or meaningless utterances in rituals and inauguration ceremonies. We are familiar with the choosing of Sanskrit names for boutiques and shops selling "ethnic" things. Knowledge of Sanskrit is no more a necessary ingredient of scholarship. One can be an Indian scholar without knowing a word of Sanskrit.

*"If I was asked what is the greatest treasure which India possesses and what is its finest heritage, I would answer unhesitatingly - it is the Sanskrit language and literature and all that it contains. This is a magnificent inheritance and as long as this endures and influences the life of our people, the basic genius of India will continue". - Jawaharlal Nehru.*

How did Sanskrit die? And why? What happened, to this classical language of India, the teaching of which was synonymous with good education? And ironically, that too in the last half century, when India became free from foreign rule!

But before that, let us look at Sanskrit in a socio-historic perspective. Sanskrit dominated the cultural history of India for centuries. From some thousand years before Christ, right upto the twentieth century, it has been an important component of education. The earliest literature of the world, the Vedas, exist in this language. It was the language of every day use for

the majority of the people in this country for more than one thousand years. Even as the dialects branching from it grew into recognizable languages and came to be spoken by the common man, Sanskrit continued to dominate the scene as the medium of education, literary activity, learned discourses and communications throughout India.

The languages of the muslim conquerors such as Persian and Arabic, not only had the same status, but merged elegantly with indigenous languages to produce fine specimens of literature. These foreign languages did not really affect the position of Sanskrit as each one had its own sphere of importance.

The impact of the British on traditional learning was not negative to begin with. They, as our rulers, had to endear themselves to the people and required the help of Sanskrit scholars to interpret traditional laws and customs. The wave of enthusiasm in Europe for Sanskrit and its literature also contributed to a generous attitude towards Sanskrit. Special institutions, like the Sanskrit College of Calcutta, were opened and publication of Sanskrit texts encouraged.

But the death knell of the Sanskrit language was sounded when the British decided to "educate" Indians. The infamous Minutes of Macaulay (1835) struck a blow that cut at the very roots of Indian culture and brought about a slow but sure decline of traditional learning. Macaulay's Minutes sought to produce "a class of persons, Indian in blood and colours, but English in taste, in opinion, in morals and in intellect."



The same year, Lord Bentinck decided that the "great objective of the British government ought to be the promotion of European literature and Science among the natives of India...and all the funds appropriated for the purpose of education would be best employed on English education and English education alone".

All printing of oriental books was stopped and oriental institutions were closed. Indigenous institutions were allowed to exist in isolation. In 1844, a government resolution declared English education in terms of "bread and butter" by directing for the first time that for public employment preference would be given in every case to those educated on English lines. Despite whatever benefit Indians may have received from English education, it definitely damaged the self-image of Indians and faith in their own culture. The process of weaning the Indians away from their own traditions, literature, scientific investigations, knowledge and wisdom had begun. *Elimination* of indigenous thought and lifestyle was being encouraged as opposed to *synthesis*.

But there can be no smoke without fire. It did not take long for many educated Indians to embrace English education to the exclusion of everything else. The description of Sanskrit as a "dead language" was becoming almost synonymous with "a dead tradition". Haphazard state education policies severed national education from the roots of national life. In the course of time, the British did succeed in producing a class of persons, Indian by birth and colour, but non Indian in their outlook and intellectual heritage. Generations of Indians nurtured in this alien education have lost their national moorings, and there has been, though not fully recognised as such, a crisis of identity.

With independence came the need to find our identity and we are still floundering in our efforts to seek it. It is here, in this need to have an identity, that re-establishing Sanskrit acquires immense importance. Sanskrit is the key to vast treasures of knowledge which we could call totally Indian and could be justly proud of.

Knowledge of Sanskrit opens vast vistas of knowledge for us. It is not

untrue to say that there is no aspect of life that has not been deeply considered. A cultural synthesis can be brought about by Sanskrit, by proving that in all regional traditions, namely in art, dance, music and drama, or in the customs and manners of the people or religious and social behaviour there are manifestations of the same Sanskrit traditions.

Some of the basic principles of the most important sciences have been considered in Sanskrit, and ample material is available today. Whereas present day science concerns itself with both the physical world around us and the external study of man as the chief protagonist in relation to it, Sanskrit literature deals with both, but more particularly with the "higher science" with the knowledge of Man and his inner being - his mind, his feelings, his spirit.

Sanskrit literature, as literatures go, explores linguistic speculation and a complete descriptive grammar, the like of which modern linguists, in spite of their collective efforts for many years, have not been able to construct.

Early Vedic literature forms the basis of the sciences of comparative philosophy, comparative religion and literature. Philosophical literature in Sanskrit is unique. All possible lines of approach have been explored to understand the "Cessation of Science", and the "Nature of things". This has led to some practical results in life. The Indian mind has been trained to be "hospitable" towards all types of ideas and notions of philosophy. Indians could be at once human and humane in their approach to things.

Every genre of literature is represented in Sanskrit-epic poetry, story telling, theatre, elaborate prose, pithy verses. In poetics and dramaturgy, Sanskrit has a distinct tradition of study and exposition.

Those who do not know the variety and depth of Sanskrit literature, tend to look upon it as the language of ritual and religious performances, and associate its study with reactionary and narrow attitudes. Sanskrit literature is by no means purely religious and sectarian in character. There is a considerable amount of technical, scientific and secular material available in Sanskrit literature. Polity, for example, finds treatment in Kautilya's *Arthashastra* and Architecture in *Manasara*. There are treatises on

surgery, on mathematics and astronomy.

Shouldn't an Indian scholar of any one of these subjects— aesthetics, mathematics, architecture, astronomy, political science etc. be more than acquainted with these classical treatises? Should we wait for somebody from the west to delve into these classical treatises, discover the secrets of Sanskrit and then work on secondary material? If we are not alert and do not cultivate a deep knowledge of Sanskrit, it will not be long before we, from India would go to America or Germany to learn from the scholars in those countries. Are we to lose our cultural or intellectual heritage and then acquire it second hand or third hand from others?

Sanskrit is a feeder language for enriching the vocabulary of modern Indian languages. Unless every well educated Indian has a thorough knowledge of Sanskrit, he will be unable to decide whether the technical terms raised by a few experts are really adequate and appropriate.

But this cannot be achieved by merely making Sanskrit compulsory at the school level, where the child is already burdened with a heavy curriculum. At that stage, the child can see no relation between learning Sanskrit and learning other subjects. It is at a higher level that Sanskrit should form a necessary component of the curriculum and the knowledge of the language should be linked with the first hand study of the Sanskrit text related to the study pursued by the students. Indian scholars should be deeply rooted in their own traditions of learning and be authorities on Sanskrit texts related to their subjects.

One cannot, however depend entirely on the authorities to encourage the learning of Sanskrit. It is upto the public, to take to Sanskrit in large numbers and to see that their children also get interested in the study of Sanskrit.

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# SOME HIGHLIGHTS OF SANSKRIT DRAMA

S.S. JANAKI

**S**anskrit drama represents the most ancient stage of India. In fact, between the development of Greek drama and the Renaissance, it was the only theatre of the world which was both flourishing and distinguished. As H.H. Wilson observed in his, 'Theatre of the Hindus', when in the 14-15th centuries, European drama emerged, Sanskrit drama had already passed its ages of perfection. Apart from references in Vedic and epic literatures, we knew of actual dramatists and specimens of Sanskrit drama from the 4th century B.C., when, already, Subandhu in his *Vasavadatta-natyadhara*, was evolving the new technique of developing the play as a series of acts within acts. In the pre-Christian ages, a galaxy of Sanskrit dramatists, including Bhasa, flourished. The next was the golden age with Asvaghosa, Kalidasa and Shudraka. Then came the great classical playwrights like Bhavabhuti, King Harsha, and Vishakadatta.

**T**he Sanskrit stage developed a wide variety of dramatic types; the Heroic (*nataka*), the Social (*prakarana*), Farce (*prahasana*), Monologue (*bhana*), and by theme, the historical, the biographical, the metaphysical and allegorical. Later, it put forth about twenty kinds of operatic dance dramas.

Of the former class, the foremost works are, *Shakuntala* of Kalidasa, and *Mricchakatika* of Shudraka, and of the latter, the *Gitagovinda* of Jayadeva, the fountainhead of all medieval, regional and erotico-spiritual dance-dramas. In sheer number, the plays and theoretical treatises that were written, form one of the largest corpuses of dramatic literature of the world.

Sanskrit drama was originally written for the stage and there are evidences of its performances having

formed part of the regular entertainment of the public. Apart from local players, there were also troupes, which moved from place to place. Integrated with music and dance, Sanskrit production, as set forth in the *Natyasastra* of Bharata (compiled during the 2nd century B.C. and 2nd cent. A.D.), the most comprehensive and remarkable treatise on drama written in any part of the world, perfected a highly artistic, idealistic and symbolic methodology.

The tradition of Sanskrit drama did not cease. Kerala even now preserves, in a most remarkable way, old types of production of Sanskrit drama in its *Kutiyattam*. The modern Indian stage, as it grew in different regions, drew heavily on Sanskrit themes and on translations and adaptations of Sanskrit plays. In South India, Sanskrit drama had a long history. In the great days of the Cholas, it was played in the

temples as *Ariya-k-kuttum* for several days continuously. As early as the beginning of the Christian era, we are told in the Buddhist work, *Avadanasa-taka* (story 75) that a South Indian *natyacharya* went up with his troupe to Shobhavati and there produced a play on the life of the Buddha. Sanskrit compositions for production in dance-drama style continued to be written till recently as the *Krishnalilatarangini* of Narayana Tirtha on the east coast and the *Krishnattam* on the west coast, to mention only two, that are actually known to be continuously presented.

It is noteworthy that the Sanskrit dramatist keeps his eye always on the *rasa* or aesthetic relish only. It is this emotional relevance or requirement that guided and helped him in giving the proper perspective to his theme, in his selection of incidents or the form and extent to which he dwelt on them. According to the Sanskrit drama convention, the audience should be made to live through the emotion which a character on the stage presents, only by sympathy. In this way alone it is possible to have the full participation of the viewer. Hence, in a Sanskrit drama, the emotional effect of an event like death has to be shown through a character rather than the death itself. Tolstoy too echoes this idea when he says,

*According to the Sanskrit drama convention, the audience should be made to live through the emotion which a character on the stage presents, only by sympathy. In this way alone it is possible to have the full participation of the viewer. Hence in a Sanskrit drama, the emotional effect of an event like death has to be shown through a character rather than the death itself.*



"to evoke this feeling in the audience by means of art, the author should make one of the characters express this pity in such a way as to infect everyone".

Just as in the case of an incident, so too the location. If the character is on a hill, in a garden or at the seaside or even in a domestic surrounding, it is not enough if the audience sees in front, meticulously arranged, the scenic reproduction of the hill, seaside, domestic room etc. But the character should mention it and react to it expressly, thereby drawing the attention of the spectator and making the latter transport himself and follow him into the location. Thus, without sets, through descriptions and appropriate reactions, Dushyanta in Kalidasa's play, *Shakuntala*, would convince one that he had come to the banks of the Malini river and its cool breezes were blowing on him. This would show how the situation is taken, as it were, *into* the character and actor, and how the lyrical and descriptive verses in Sanskrit plays have their purpose.

This brings us to the chief feature of ancient Indian productions in which sets were next to nothing and the presentation was idealistic and symbolic. Music was continuously employed and the whole presentation was integrated

with instrumentation and song. It will be useful to point out now that ancient Sanskrit texts on dramaturgy and music have many ideas useful to the modern producer on the effective harnessing of music. The other closely related art form which Sanskrit drama could not be separated from was dance and *abhinaya*. Movements were in stylised dance and acting, not diffused or impromptu, but a regular interpretation through a systematic language of *abhinaya* of the face, and the limbs of the body, particularly the hand, producing a concentrated form of action. Thus, true to its etymology, *abhinaya* in a Sanskrit drama refers to all the elements that bring out the total import of the thing presented on the stage. The stylised movements include symbolic ones which obviate stage properties and suffice for such things as riding or going in a chariot or mounting steps or some height or wading through water. Such representation is essentially artistic in so far as it is intrinsic and introspective and keeps the emphasis on the artist himself and not on external aids and appurtenances.

Such are the few unique characteristics of ancient Sanskrit drama which was first introduced to the West in 1789 in William Jones's translation of its foremost creation, the *Shakuntala*

of Kalidasa. Two years after this, the German translation of this play by Forster influenced Goethe, who burst into a sonnet of praise for the play, imitated its prologue in his *Faust* and planned to adapt it for the Weimer stage. Interest in Sanskrit drama grew in France and Germany in the nineteenth century. Even smaller forms like the monologue and the farce were studied, and histories of Indian literature, culture, and drama in general included accounts of Sanskrit drama. Currently, the department of Indology and Theatre in the United States there is a renewed interest in knowing the technicalities of ancient Sanskrit drama. For the restlessly searching playwrights and producers, Bharata and Kalidasa have probably something deep and true to offer afresh. ●

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## Water

*The wise leader is like water.*

*Consider water: water cleanses and refreshes all creatures without distinction and without judgement; water freely and fearlessly goes deep beneath the surface of things; water is fluid and responsive; water follows the law freely.*

*Consider the leader: The leader works in any setting without complaint, with any person or issue that comes on the floor; the leader acts so that all will benefit and serves well regardless of the rate of pay; the leader speaks simply and honestly and intervenes in order to shed light and great harmony.*

*From watching the movements of water, the leader has learnt that in action, timing is everything.*

*Like water, the leader is yielding. Because the leader does not push, the group does not resent or resist.*



# THE MYTH AND HOW I BLEW IT FOR MYSELF

BHARTENDU PANDE

**T**he basic foundation of any 'nationhood' exists in its culture. Especially in a nation like India where the role of culture supercedes that of its politics. And Sanskrit is the casket of that culture that is at the basis of Indian nationality. In other words, if culture is the nectar element of the nation, then Sanskrit is the vessel that holds this nectar. It is virtually the foundation as well as the pinnacle of the huge palace called, India. Only a fool can state that its present day invisibility makes it impertinent or irrelevant.

The propagation that the language was only used by priests for archaic religious rituals is a myth that is widely believed today. The German linguist, Winter Nitz noted that whenever the human intellect made its presence in India, books were written in Sanskrit. In other words, the language shouldered the development of knowledge and science. In fact, the very language that is being touted as being anti-science, is being claimed by some scientists to be most computer-efficient!

The sabotage and conversion of traditional schools into Anglo-Sanskrit colleges saw the death of a well developed Indian system. Literate Indians gradually became unaware of Sanskrit.

An oft-repeated accusation is that of India's 'conservatism' because of her supposedly 'non-inventive' intellect, tied down, as it were, by her native traditions and rituals. Educated Indians, aided by this propaganda, were quick to rid themselves of this 'conservatism'. It is ironical that in the process they rejected a language that spoke of *vade vade jayate tatvabodha* (Discussions alone lead to real knowledge). Can such a language be really conservative? In fact, it goes on to refute the relatively comfortable dictum, 'Old is Gold', by saying, *puranmityev na sadhu sarvam* (Old is not always the best).

We achieved our political independence in 1947. Can we say the same of our minds? The relegation of Sanskrit to oblivion in our education has posed a great setback to our search for national identity, since the soul of the culture of India reposes in that language. If we do not rediscover our real mental liberty, then are we in a position to talk about economic liberty?

As for the question of why I chose Sanskrit as a subject for my P.h.d. I have always loved literature and wanted to study one, sincerely and analytically. Hindi came naturally to me, so I didn't want to pursue that. Then I began reading foreign scholars of Sanskrit such as Max Mueller and Blumfield. The English Sanskrit scholar, Wilson wrote:

*Na jaane vidhyate kim tam madhuryamatra Sanskrit*

*Sarva daiva madonmatta yena vaideeshika vayam'*

(I do not know what kind of sweetness Sanskrit possesses that hypnotises us foreigners).

All major Indian languages have about 65% of Sanskrit in their lexicon, although, languages like Malayalam derive more than 85% of its terminology from Sanskrit. Thus, a student of Sanskrit can understand most Indian languages using the vocabulary root which is Sanskritic. But, unfortunately, if this was the case, 'language' as an issue would not have shed as much blood as it has, already.

Sanskrit has immense capacity to emphasise words and adapt to a fast-changing world. The union of Sanskrit with local tongues have produced a vocabulary of richness and diversity. My own Hindi writing and speech, strengthened by Sanskrit, have become more forceful, impressive and convincing.

Another benefit of Sanskrit in my personal context is that, since I cannot see the world, (I have lost my

eyesight), written and published literature has a very limited role in my life. A key feature of the language is the composition of its grammar by emphasis on *shruti* and *smriti*, (hearing and memory). Sanskrit texts are written in *shlokas* or verses which can be memorised and recited. Thus my helplessness in other fields was converted to a strength. I managed to top the university in M.A. Sanskrit.

Some of the confusions regarding Sanskrit. One, that it is difficult. Alberuni writes that Sanskrit was a closely guarded language and the hegemony of the pundits over the language contributed to the feeling that it was esoteric and difficult. Experimentation by way of small Sanskrit-speaking camps organised all over the country prove that it can be easily picked up. Many candidates have opted for Sanskrit as their main subject in competitive examinations, such as the Civil Services. It has proved easier and more scoring.

What is the future of this once dynamic language? It has been ignored under the pressures of consumerism. It would not be an exaggeration to say that should Sanskrit be used in future computer software, the mad materialists of the world can take recourse to some occasional wisdom! ●

*While doing his high school, Bhartendu Pande lost his eyesight due to Retinitis Pigmentosa. Despite this handicap, he managed to top Meerut University in 1988. He is currently doing his P.h.d in the same University, in Sanskrit. He has participated in several well known Hindi and Sanskrit debates, seminars and essay competitions and has won several gold medals.*



*One Vishnusharman shrewdly gleaning  
All wordly wisdom's inner meaning,  
In these five books the charm compresses  
Of all such books the world possesses.*



*It is said that an ounce of sense contained in the Panchatantra is better than a ton of scholarship. Most of us are familiar with it from our childhood as 'once-upon-a-time' stories and have read them in abridged forms or in comics. Rarely have we encountered a literal translation in verse form. Indeed these wise verses, often epigrammatic in style, go to make the real character of the Panchatantra. The stories are charming when regarded as pure narrative, but it is the beauty, wisdom and wit of the verses which lift the Panchatantra above the best story books.*

*The Panchatantra is a 'niti shastra' or textbook of 'niti'. The word 'niti' roughly means the 'wise conduct of life'. It is witty, mischievous and profoundly sane. The word, 'Panchatantra' means, the 'Five Books', 'the Pentateuch'. Each of the five books are independent, consisting of a framing story with numerous, inserted stories, told by one or another of the characters of the main narrative. The device of the framing story is familiar in oriental works, as in the Arabian Nights. The large majority of the actors are animals, who have, of course, a fairly constant character. Thus, the lion is strong, but dull of wit, the jackal, crafty, the heron stupid, the cat, a hypocrite. The animal actors present far more vividly and shrewdly, undecieved and free of all sentimentality, a view, that piercing the humbug of every false ideal, reveals with incomparable wit, the sources of lasting joy.*

*And this is how it happened.....*

*happened.....*

## INTRODUCTION

And this is how it happened. In the southern country is a city called, Maiden's Delight. There lived a king named Immortal-Power. He was familiar with all the works dealing with the wise conduct of life. His feet were made dazzling by the tangle of rays of light from jewels in the diadems of mighty kings who knelt before him. He had reached the far shore of all the arts that embellish life. This king had three sons. Their names were Rich-Power, Fierce-Power, Endless-Power, and they were supreme blockheads.

Now when the king perceived that they were hostile to education, he summoned his counsellors and said, "Gentlemen, it is known to you that these sons of mine, being hostile to education, are lacking in discernment. So when I behold them, my kingdom brings me no happiness, though all external thorns are drawn. For there is wisdom in the proverb:

*Of sons unborn, or dead, or fools,  
Unborn or dead will do:  
They cause a little grief, no doubt;  
But fools, a long life through.*

*And again:  
To what good purpose can a cow  
That brings no calf nor milk, be bent?*

*Or why beget a son who proves  
A dunce and disobedient?*

Some means must therefore be devised to awaken their intelligence."

And they, one after another, replied; "O King, first one learns grammar, in twelve years. If this subject has somehow been mastered, then one masters the books on religion and practical life. Then the intelligence awakens."

But one of their number, a counsellor named Keen, said: "O King, the duration of life is limited, and the verbal sciences require much time for mastery. Therefore let some kind of epitome be devised to wake their intelligence. There is a proverb that says:

*Since verbal sciences has no final end,*

*Since life is short, and obstacles impend,*

*Let central facts be picked and firmly fixed,*

*As swans extract the milk with water mixed.*



"Now there is a Brahman here named Vishnusharman, with a reputation for competence in numerous sciences. Entrust the princes to him. He will certainly make them intelligent in a twinkling."

When the king had listened to this, he summoned Vishnusharman and said, "Holy sir, as a favour to me you must make these princes incomparable masters of the art of practical life. In return, I will bestow upon you a hundred land-grants."

And Vishnusharman made this answer to the king, "O King, listen. Here is the plain truth. I am not the man to sell good learning for a hundred land-grants. But if I do not, in six months' time, make the boys acquainted with the art of intelligent living, I will give up my own name. Let us cut the matter short. Listen to my lion roar. My boasting arises from no greed for cash. Besides, I have no use for money; I am eighty years old, and all the objects of sensual desire have lost their charm. But in order that your request may be granted, I will show a sporting spirit in reference to artistic matters. Make a note of the date. If I fail to render your sons, in six month's time, incomparable masters of the art of intelligent living, then His Majesty is at liberty to show me His Majestic bare bottom."

When the king, surrounded by his counsellors, had listened to the Brahman's highly unconventional promise, he was dumbstruck. He entrusted the princes to him, and experienced supreme content.

Meanwhile, Vishnusharman took the boys, went home, and made them learn by heart five books which he composed and called:

- (I) The Loss of Friends
- (II) The Winning of Friends
- (III) Crows and Owls
- (IV) Loss of Gains
- (V) Ill-considered Action.

These the princes learned, and in six month's time they answered the prescription. Since that day this work on the art of intelligent living, called Panchatantra, or the Five Books, has travelled the world, aiming at awakening the intelligence in the young.

*Whoever learns the work by heart,  
Or through the story-teller's art  
Becomes acquainted,  
His life by sad defeat—although  
The king of heaven be his foe—  
Is never tainted.*

# LOSS OF FRIENDS

*Here then begins Book I, called, "The Loss of Friends."*

*The first verse runs :*

*The forest lion and the bull  
Were linked in friendship, growing, full;  
A jackal then estranged the friends  
For greedy and malicious ends.  
And this is how it happened.*

**I**n the southern country was a city called, Maiden's Delight. It rivalled the city of heaven's King, so abounding in every urban excellence as to form the central jewel of

spacious squares and crossings. It wore a moat-girdled zone of walls that recalled the high-uplifted Himalayas.

In this city lived a merchant named Increase. He possessed a heap of nu-



the Earth's diadem. Its contour was like the peak of Kailash. Its gates and palaces were stocked with machines, missile weapons, and chariots in great variety. Its central portal, as massive as Indrakila Mountain, was filled with bolt and bar, panel and arch, all formidable, impressive, solid. Its numerous temples lifted their firm bulk near

merous virtues, and a heap of money, a result of the accumulation of merit in earlier lives.

As he once pondered in the dead of night, his conclusions took form : "Even an abundant store of wealth, if pecked at, sinks together like a pile of soot. A very little, if added to, grows like an ant-hill. Hence, even though



money be abundant, it should be increased. Riches unearned should be earned. What is earned, should be guarded. What is guarded, should be enlarged and heedfully invested. Money, even if hoarded in commonplace fashion, is likely to go in a flash, the hindrances being many. Money unemployed when opportunities arise, is the same as money unpossessed. Therefore, money once acquired should be guarded, increased, employed. As the proverb says :

*Realise the money you have earned;  
So keep it safely still:  
The surplus water of a tank  
Must find a way to spill.*

*Wild elephants are caught by tame;  
With capital it is the same:  
In business, beggars have no scope  
Whose stock-in-trade is empty hope.*

*If any fail to use his fate  
For joy in this or future state,  
His riches serve as foolish fetters;  
He simply keeps them for his  
betters."*

Having thus set his mind in order, he collected merchandise. Bound for the city of Mathura, he assembled his servants, and after saying farewell to his parents when asterism and lunar stations were auspicious, set forth from the city, with his people following and with blare of conch-shell and beats of drum preceding. At the first water he bade his friends to turn back, while he proceeded.

To bear the yoke he had two bulls of good omen. Their names were Joyful and Lively; they looked like white clouds, and their chests were girded with golden bells.

Presently he reached a forest, lovely with griseas, acacias, dhaks and sals, densely planted with other trees of charming aspect; fearsome with elephants, wild oxen, buffaloes, deer, grunting-cows, boars, tigers, leopards, and bears; abounding in water that issued from the flanks of mountains; rich in caves and thickets.

Here the bull, Lively, was overcome, partly by the excessive weight of the wagon, partly because one foot

*In all cities, capitals,  
towns, hamlets, market-  
centres, settlements, border-  
posts, land-grants,  
monasteries, and communi-  
ties there is just one occupant  
of the lion's post. Relatively  
few are as active as the lion's  
guard. The understappers are  
the indiscriminate throng. The  
menials are posted on the  
outskirts. The three classes are  
each divided into members  
high, middle, and low.*

sank helpless where far-flung water from cascades made a muddy spot. At this spot the bull somehow snapped the yoke and sank in a heap. When the driver saw that he was down, he jumped excitedly from the wagon, ran to the merchant not far away, and humbly bowing, said, "Oh, my Lord! Lively was wearied by the trip, and sank in the mud."

On hearing this, merchant Increase was deeply dejected. He halted for five nights, but when the poor bull did not return to health, he left caretakers with a supply of fodder, and said, "You must join me later, bringing Lively, if he lives; if he dies, after performing the last sad rites." Having given these directions, he started for his destination.

On the next day, the men, fearing the many drawbacks of the forest, started also and made a false report to their master. "Poor Lively died," they said, "and we performed the last rites with fire and everything else." And the merchant, feeling grieved for a mere moment, out of gratitude, performed a ceremony that included rites for the departed, then journeyed without hindrance to Mathura.

In the meantime, Lively, since his fate willed it and further life was predestined, hobbled step by step to the bank of the Jamuna, his body invigorated by a mist of spray from the cascades. There he browsed on the





emerald tips of grass-blades, and in a few days grew as plump as Shiva's bull, high-humped, and full of energy. Every day he tore the tops of ant-hills with goring horns, and frisked like an elephant.

But one day, a lion named, Rusty, with a retinue of all kinds of animals, came down to the bank of the Jumuna for water. There he heard Lively's prodigious bellow. The sound troubled his heart exceedingly, but he concealed his feelings, while, beneath a spreading banyan tree he drew up his company in what is called the Circle of Four.

Now the division of the Circle of Four are given as : (1) the lion (2) the lion's guard (3) the understrappers (4) the menials. In all cities, capitals, towns, hamlets, market-centres, settlements, border-posts, land-grants, monasteries, and communities there is just one occupant of the lion's post. Relatively few are as active as the lion's guard. The understrappers are the indiscriminate throng. The menials are posted on the outskirts. The three classes are each divided into members high, middle, and low.

Now Rusty, with counsellors and intimates, enjoyed a kingship of the following order. His royal office, though lacking the pomp of umbrella, flyflap, fan, vehicle, and amorous display, was held erect by sheer pride in the sentiment of unaffected pluck. He showed unbroken haughtiness and abounding self-esteem. He manifested a native zeal for unchecked power that brooked no rival. He was ignorant of cringing speech, which he delegated to those who like that sort of thing. He functioned by means of impatience, wrath, haste and hauteur. His manly goal was fearlessness, disdaining fawning, stranger to obsequiousness, unalarmed. He made use of no wheedling artifices, but glittered in his reliance on enterprise, valor, dignity. He advertised the reward of manliness by its pleasure in benefiting others. He was unconquered, free from constraint and meanness, while he had no thought of elaborating defensive works. He kept no account of revenue and expenditure. He knew no deviousness nor time-serving, but was prickly with the energy earned by loftiness of spirit. He wasted no deliberation on the conventional six expedi-

*He had an uncommon  
appetite for power, never  
adopted subterfuges, was  
never an object of  
suspicion. He paid no heed  
to ambush-layers, to their  
torrents of tears or their  
squeals. He was  
without reproach. He had  
no artificial training in the  
use of weapons, but he did  
not disappoint  
expectations. He found  
satisfactory food and shelter  
without dependence on  
servants.*



ents, nor did he hoard weapons or jewelry. He had an uncommon appetite for power, never adopted subterfuges, was never an object of suspicion. He paid no heed to ambush-layers, to their torrents of tears or their squeals. He was without reproach. He had no artificial training in the use of weapons, but he did not disappoint expectations. He found satisfactory food and shelter without dependence on servants. He had no timidity about any forest, and no alarms. His head was high. As the proverb says :

*The lion needs, in forest station,  
No trappings and no education,  
But lonely power and pride;  
And all the song his subjects sing,  
Is in the words: "O King! O King!"  
No epithet beside.*

And again:

*The lion needs, for his appointing,  
No ceremony, no anointing:  
His deeds of heroism bring  
Him fortune. Nature crowns him  
king.*

*The elephant is the lion's meat,  
With drops of trickling ichor sweet:  
Though lack thereof should come  
to pass,  
The lion does not nibble grass.*

Now Rusty had in his train, two jackals, sons of counsellors, but out of a job. Their names were Cheek and Victor. These two conferred secretly, and Victor said; "My dear Cheek, just look at our master, Rusty. He came this way for water. For what reasons does he crouch here so disconsolate?" "Why meddle, my dear fellow?" said Cheek. "There is a saying:

*Death pursues the meddling flunkey:  
Note the wedge-extracting monkey."*

"How was that?" asked Victor. ●  
*To be continued in the next issue*

*In 1924, Arthur W. Ryder, the well known American Oriental scholar translated the Panchatantra from Sanskrit to English. It is one of the best of all existing translations in any foreign language. The text here translated, dates back from the year 1199 A.D. We are happy to serialise and present the Panchatantra, interspersing verse and prose as translated by Ryder and published by Jaico.*

*Illustrations: Rustam.*

*"The memories of a man in his old age are the deeds of a man in his prime"-Pink Floyd from their album "Works"*



# DEBATE

Amphitheatre, Senate, Panchayat and the modern Parliament. Debates have been an integral part of the working of all societies. But what of all of us? Are we not exercisers of franchise, poised to be at the helm of future policy making bodies? Do we not have a role in bringing our voices on to the national forum? Our voices are the national forum. And this Written -Word -Debate is our effort to be heard. This is our movement.

TOPIC:

## MODERN DAY ADVERTISING IS LEADING TO THE CULTURAL DOMINATION OF THE THIRD WORLD.

● We wish to print a fair treatment of the topic. Therefore, the above motion must be debated for or against. Choose any **ONE** side.

● Your written-word-debate must be well thought out, have depth, vision and originality, and above all, make for interesting reading. It should not be longer than 2000 words.

● Send in your debate with your name, age and address clearly written in block letters. A brief, six-line bio-data should be included.

● The best entries, one **FOR** and the other **AGAINST** the motion will be published in our next issue. These two debaters will be entitled to one year's subscription, of **THE EYE** free of cost.

● Your debate will be printed in our March/April issue.

● We are looking for quality of thought and language, so keep that in mind.

Send in your entries latest by February 10th, 1992, to, The Coordinator Debates, 143, Golf Links, New Delhi 110003.

Are you a serious thinker? Would you like to see your debate motion debated by others? Send us your motion, neatly written, along with your name and address. **HURRY!**

**Good Luck!**

*Topic contributed by Dr. Meenakshi Gopinath, Principal, Lady Sriram College, New Delhi.*



# SINGER OF ETERNAL VALUES

ARUNA SITESH

**T**he simply-clad genteel lady devoting herself to her garden, her books, and her poetry - that was Mahadevi Verma. She demonstrated, as not many other Indian writers did, the striking discrepancy sometimes discernible between art and biography. Her poetry is basically rebellious, strong-souled, hard-minded, and even iconoclastic at times. The fine-spun filaments of feeling characterising each one of her poems reveal a woman who can be measured only by her work, for her biography leaves little on which to build.

Mahadevi received the first 'Bharat Bharati Award' of the Uttar Pradesh Government, started only last year. Founder-Principal of Prayag Mahila Vidyapith, organiser of Sahityakar Sansad of Rasoolabad, Editor of the now defunct Chand, as much at ease with words as with line and pencil, Mahadevi was basically a humanitarian dedicated to the nationalist cause.

Bharatiya Jnanpith lent itself honour by announcing its 18th Award to Mahadevi Verma, 76, for her collection of poems *Yama*, (1939). 185 poems of *Neehar*, *Rashmi*, *Neeraja* and *Sandhya Geet* brought together in *Yama* reveal her meditative and mystic leanings.

The only surviving precursor of the *Chhayavad*-the other three being Nirala, Pant and Prasad — Mahadevi combines contemporary belief in the individual self with humanist mysticism.

As the twentieth century draws to its close, we are made more and more aware of the disintegrating forces tearing us apart. Caught between the sky-rocketing splendours of science and a constant struggle for mere survival, Romanticism may appear today under a heavy cloud. Mysticism is bound to

be still more alien at a time when the very existence of God raises umpteen doubts and question marks.

Romanticism, a name given originally to a movement in European literature in the last quarter of the eighteenth century, replaced the old narrow intellectual attitude by a much wider perspective, taking in its fold the claims of passion and emotion, and the sense of mystery in life. The critical gave way to the creative spirit and wit to humour and pathos.

The Romantic, by its very nature is invested with romance and imaginative appeal. In Mahadevi's case, however, romance appears to mean not the redolence or suggestion of the adventurous and chivalrous, but the capacity to accept and that too with grace and fortitude, the chasm inherent in our very existence. Escape being the watchword of the age trapped in a mesh of opposing pressures of all kinds, an attempt to see stark

reality in its face carries all possible romantic connotations. And this behoves a poetess who was not satisfied with losing herself in songs of glory bygone and passion spent, remote from the scenes and incidents of ordinary life, but wants to articulate the throttled voice of the multitudes of the country whose life is a constant nightmare.

The neo-Romanticism of the twentieth century is anti-bourgeois in its rejection of urban life and glorification of the country folk. Smriti Ki Rekhayen and Ateet ki Chalchitra vividly bring out the accursed existence of the village folk, the contrast between the town and the country and the innocence and integrity these simple people are struggling hard to retain.

Mahadevi did not reject the urban way of life either. She was only too



Pix courtesy: Sahitya Akademi

***Mahadevi did not reject the urban way of life either. She was only too acutely aware of the melancholic sadness engulfing each one of us to think along those narrow boundaries and dwelled in a world of feeling, longing, sensibility, nostalgia and pain.***



acutely aware of the melancholic sadness engulfing each one of us to think along those narrow boundaries and dwelled in a world of feeling, longing, sensibility, nostalgia and pain.

But pain is a many-splendoured thing, creating humility, promoting equilibrium even at the zenith of one's prosperity and resulting in an identification with others' woes and sorrows.

Against the introverted ache of the Romantics, Mahadevi has universalised her private ache, or more accurately, made the universal suffering her own. Pain gave her sympathy, not in the somewhat superficial modern sense but in the original Greek sense. She is sure that pain alone binds us together because "we are tempted to enjoy our happiness in solitude all by ourselves but pain we like to share. A poet's mission is to immerse herself in the tides of the world, and her grief is in the general sorrow, the way a drop of water readily and happily loses itself in the vast sea."

Born and brought up in an atmosphere of affluence, both material and cultural, Mahadevi did not encounter any known obstacles in the realisation of her personal aspirations. And yet, she opted for the world of pain, a mystery to this day. That Mahadevi knew of no personal deprivation of any kind that could explain her poetry of pain and agony has baffled many. But the absence of personal sorrow as its motivation is the main strength of her poetry. Had life been unkind to her, there would have been nothing great, or even strange, in her pining for what is not. Now she pines for the fulfilment of others' aspirations and ambitions. She identifies herself with the masses flanked around and expresses the woes of those who are "born to blush unseen and waste their sweetness on the desert air."

*Will you allow softness and charm to chain you?*

*Will destination be lost in the glitter of chromatic hue?*

*Will your piety get drowned in bits of dwarfish dew?*

(Sandhya Geet)

Prince Siddhartha renounced his rightful comforts to be able to probe into the causes of misery manifesting

**Prince Siddhartha  
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itself in all walks of life. This voluntary renunciation lent the whole episode an aura of grace and splendour. It was after years of asceticism that he realised that pain was an integral part of existence. Attempts to eradicate it wholly would only add to the human misery. It was, therefore, to be accepted and accepted gracefully. This was an enlightenment after which he became Lord Buddha and decided to preach to ailing humanity.

Mahadevi felt the same, so much so that at one time she went as far as to become a Buddhist nun herself. But she was no preacher. Being an artist, a poetess, she could not go beyond the multi-faceted agony inflicted on humanity. Her poems reveal her bleeding for the wounds of the people around:

*Radiate the light, let world gleam,  
Melting thy little self into luminous  
beam.*

*Glowing all days and glittering each  
night.*

*In cheer and delight, go on my lamp,  
bright.*

(Sandhinee)

*What sacrifice! What self-effacement!!  
What optimism!!!*

*At another place she says:*

*A blissless brimful  
cloud...that's I*

*Traversing like an outlander*

*Along the vast sky*

*With a puny past and a dismal account  
Created to flit, to fade and die.*

(Sandhinee)

Nothing could better convey the evanescent transience of life. The wandering cloud is sad in its loneliness, yet it can't rest in peace till it has revived the parched furrows.

The lamp has been the recurrent motif in her poems. Both implicitly and explicitly it brightens the pathway, while itself remaining in darkness. Another recurrent motif is the lotus, rooted in mud, yet pleasing and soothing to the eye of the beholder. Likewise, Mahadevi has endeavoured wholeheartedly and untiringly to give solace and light to the wearied traveller, without forsaking her roots, howsoever muddy, howsoever dark.

*Look to the endless tears of humanity  
Not the smile that my lips may hold.*

*Ignore the shattered dreams in my  
eyes*

*Tend to the buds withering in the  
cold.*

(Neeraja)

It is not only the agony of others against her personal joy but also the misfortune of the masses against her private grief. This is where Mahadevi transcends the Romantic boundary of individualism, of the poet's personal outlook on the world, and enters the realm of mysticism—though with a difference.

Modern mysticism may have drawn heavily upon classical philosophy but it is certainly elastic enough to express and explore the contradictions and complexities inherent in the individual and



collective existence. Around 1920 our nationalistic fervour gave way to introspection. Following the setbacks received in the independence struggle, poetic activity concentrated on personal hopes and aspirations, personal gains and losses and the divine relatedness of the ephemeral with the infinite. This romantic trend verged so much on the mystic, that, till today the controversy whether these two concepts were mutually exclusive has not been satisfactorily resolved.

Concepts of universal suffering, cosmic illusion and impermanence are the main components of modern mysticism. According to Dr. Radhakrishnan, "the sickly minded and the suffering of reduced vitality and weak nerves the world over try to heal their sickness by either seeking repose and calm, deliverance and *Nirvana* through art, knowledge, morality or else, intoxication, ecstasy, bewilderment and madness." (Indian Philosophy, Vol. I, p.272)

Not so with Mahadevi.

Mahadevi can't be restricted to any *ism*, imbibing as she does, the new, the contemporary and the past inheritance—an amalgam of the temporal and the eternal. Her mysticism is individualistic, nationalistic and humanistic. It articulates individual emotion and passion, relegating the philosophical to a less significant level. It is neither pure sentimentalism nor spiritualism.

Mahadevi is no self-cheating spiritualist working only in darkness and fearing the light. She is a serious seeker after truth. Her poetry may appear limited in its range, but it attains high intuitions and is no mere passing fancy.

She finds in pain the crux of our existence. Projecting the independence of art and the individual, her's is that humanistic approach which endeavours to look for what lies hidden behind the concrete objectivism of the age, the subtle essence-through the human medium. She is sure that "the sensitivity of a true artist touches both the explicit and implicit truths, his dream encompasses the known and the unknown, and her feeling concretises not only the existent but also the possible reality."

Through her mysticism, she seeks to realise "the imminence of the temporal in the eternal and the eternal in the temporal! Traces of it occur in theosophical Hinduism-theosophy or

"divine wisdom" which professes to attain a knowledge of God by indirect intuition. Mahadevi may or may not possess this intuition but there certainly is a desire in her to reach God through His creation. Her endeavour to grasp the divine essence or the ultimate reality of things involves the total consummation of the love of God and His creation.

***Mahadevi kept constant  
watch on public conscience  
by reminding them of  
Gheesas, Bhaktins,  
Jangias, Dhanias, Butiyas,  
Jhakuri Babas, Jhankooos,  
Ramayees, Gungias and  
even the Chinese vendor  
who caused her admirers  
some embarrassment in the  
early sixties.  
Deep rooted in tradition she  
was not tied to it.***

Her art, therefore, transcends all personal considerations and encompasses entire humanity in its benevolent fold.

According to Acharya Nand Dulare Vajpeyi, both Mira and Mahadevi seem to belong to the same philosophic tradition. Every age has its own limitations and visions. It is unfair and ever so often, too far-fetched to equate any two figures belonging to two periods as far stretched in time and sensibility as Mira's and Mahadevi's. Mira was devoted and dedicated to Krishna-possessed by the attributes of the idol. Mahadevi belongs to the age of science and logic. She may have surrendered to the unknown, the divine, but she very much remains a product of her times. She has come a long way since Mira's times. She is dedicated to the world—the world of immutable pain and omnipotent God. She won't allow herself to forget that fancy cannot really "cheat so well".

An artist is no warrior. Nor can she live in a world of make-believe. Art

does not, cannot, come out of a vacuum. Cut off from tradition, society and the reader, the artist curbs her creative sensibility as well. Mahadevi asserted that "poetry is eternal in its communication; the sensibility of a particular age can only change its exterior." No one can possibly dissociate oneself from the society of one's time and yet say things relevant to it. Hence, her strong grasp on the actual-though in a mellifluous way. She knows her duties towards society, the nation, more so because she is a poetess with heightened sensibility and sensitivity. Mahadevi kept a constant watch on public conscience by reminding them of Gheesas, Bhaktins, Jangias, Dhanias, Butiyas, Jhakuri Babas, Jhankooos, Ramayees, Gungias and even the Chinese vendor who caused her admirers some embarrassment in the early sixties. Society could not be allowed to slumber-not when Mahadevis were around. Didn't someone say that the pen is mightier than the sword?

Against fast-depleting values, eroding convictions and dissolving norms, Mahadevi stood firm and steadfast. In a world marked by chaos and disbelief shone the unwavering flicker of her dedicated devotion. Deep rooted in tradition she was not tied to it. Aware of her surroundings she was only too well-versed with its limitations. An atheist by temperament, she was free from communalism. An exponent of beauty in art, she was equally interested in revealing the truth. Her works are embodiments of undying faith and unwavering hope. She was an important link between the past and the present. Who knows that the greatest achievements of our time in the material world may not pale before the splendid light of some approaching spiritual revelation? Mahadevi is perhaps "the last romantic" who "chose for her theme, traditional sanctity and loveliness". And her optimism is simply fascinating:

***What if the terrain be unknown  
And the trekker alone?  
.....Alien are the feet  
That would take defeat  
And with shattered will  
Bow to the odds and turn to retreat.  
(Deep Shikha) ●***

*Courtesy: Pratibha India*



## REVELATION

BALACHANDRAN CHULLIKAD

## PEACE

*I don't fear the king.  
So I tell people the truth.  
Our peace  
is the length of cord  
That connects bombs;  
it awaits fire.  
Our peace  
is the distance  
between a beating heart  
and a rushing bayonet;  
every second it is reduced.  
Our peace  
is the chanting of Rama's name  
when three bullets pierced the  
half-naked body;  
it can't save the country.  
Our peace  
is the last breath  
of the one who falls down  
unable to show his right cheek  
when slapped on the left;  
he may as well die.  
Our peace  
is the silent accus 't  
standing in the doc  
Judgement is always ag. 'st  
him.  
I don't fear death  
So I tell the truth about life.*



## REVELATION

*The hunter's arrow finds its  
mark  
in my heart,  
but my poetry hasn't its  
sharpness.  
His bullets pierce my chest,  
but the music of the gun's  
barrel  
doesn't resound in my song.  
The hoofs trample upon my  
flesh  
but my words don't have  
the death-speed of warhorses.  
It's my shoulder blades that are  
crushed,  
but like those of the pallasquin  
bearers  
my ideas don't sweat  
but my poems are not red hot.*



*Balachandran Chullikad was born in Kerala in 1957. He is a fiery poet of Kerala's new generation of singing poets. In 1980 he published his book "Pathinettu Kavithakal "or Eighteen poems". In 1982 and 1987 he published "Amavasi and Ghazal". He has revived the art of lifting poetry from the page to the chanting of it, the oral tradition. He is currently based in Kaloor, Cochin.*

*Courtesy: Sanskriti Pratishthan, New Delhi*

TO CHOSE  
AN ISLAND

SANJULA SHARMA

*To be encased  
in a mantle of despair  
With a stiff lining of loneliness  
Feels caged.*

*To be entrapped  
within the walls of frustration  
To lie beside a writhing soul  
Is imprisonment.*

*Of a different kind.*

*My posture droops  
and with vacant eyes  
I cease thinking of a morrow.  
Sometimes a thin film gauzes my eyes  
And vacancy is relieved  
by flitting images  
Of a yester that once was.*

*And with this oasis  
I must quench my thirst for now.*

*Yesterday I chanced on a sea-gull  
It's silhouette a white, dancing form  
In the balmy darkness.*

*I envied it.....  
It could choose an island in the  
morning sun.*

*Sanjula Sharma is a free lance  
journalist based in Delhi.*





## THE DAY WAS BREAKING

MAYURA TIWARI

*The day was breaking  
Flashing a million diamonds  
In limpid pools of dew  
Left there by night in memory.*

*The wind blew in whispers  
The grasses swayed and danced  
And from the distance in graceful  
leaps  
Came Nature's poetry.*

*Such magnificence, such beauty  
My eyes were blest to see  
The gentle deer as though was born  
From the womb of fantasy.*

*My breath was gone as the scene  
Kissed my heart in ecstasy  
Then I heard the hunter shoot  
One by one each simple truth.*

## ON THE GULF WAR

*Come lets have some duck  
Marinated in oil  
And grilled over a bombfire  
So what if it isn't  
Christmas eve?  
Fireworks are every where.  
Come lets' go to Baghdad  
There's a warfair on  
There are scuds  
and patriots  
And so many others  
You can actually see them bomb  
And the rubble afterwards.*

*Who's dying of thirst?  
You, Fahd?  
or you there, General?  
Is the desert heat too much to bear?  
Come, Come with me to the bombing  
sites  
Quench your thirst with teardrops  
Streaming from those hollow eyes.*

*Mayura Tiwari is the Poetry  
Editor of THE EYE and writes  
poetry in her spare time*

## GENESIS...LAST CHAPTER

*This commentary on the modern world and the way it is going was written by Kenneth Ross for the Idaho Wildlife Review.*

In the end  
There was Earth, and it was with form and beauty.  
And man dwelt upon the lands of the Earth, the meadows and trees, and he said "Let us build our dwellings in this place of beauty".  
And he built cities and covered the Earth with concrete and steel.  
And the meadows were gone.  
And man said, "It is good".  
On the second day, man looked upon the waters of the earth that the dirt will be washed away."  
And man did.  
And the waters became polluted and foul in their smell.  
And man said, "It is good."  
On the third day, man looked upon the forests of the Earth and saw they were beautiful. And man said.  
"Let us cut the timber for our homes and grind the wood for our use"  
And man did.  
And the lands became barren and the trees were gone.  
And man said, "It is good".  
On the fourth day, man saw that animals were in abundance and ran in the fields and played in the sun.  
And man said, "Let us raise these animals for our amusement and kill them for our sport".  
And man did. And there were no more animals on the face of the Earth.  
And man said, "It is good."  
On the fifth day, man breathed the air of the Earth.  
And man said, "Let us dispose of our wastes into the air for the winds shall blow them away."  
And man did. And the air became filled with the smoke and the fumes could not be blown away."  
And the air became heavy with dust and choked and burned.  
And man said, "It is good."  
On the sixth day, man saw himself; and seeing the many languages and tongues, he feared and hated.  
And man said, "Let us build great machines and destroy these lest they destroy us."  
And man built great machines and the Earth was fired with the rage of great wars.  
And man said, "It is good."  
On the seventh day, man rested from his labours and the Earth was still for man no longer dwelt upon the Earth.

*Courtesy: Fourth World Review*

*Send in your poems to  
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# HOPE AND CONSERVATION

SATIS CHANDRAN NAIR

**C**onservation, thought and action is a reaffirmation of human hope. Hope in the unforeseen future, hope in other people and hope in one's own goodness. Hope is equivalent to faith, generosity, willingness to concede the equal rights of every thing else in our perceptible world.

In a sense, the entire plight of the world today can be attributed to the fading of hope in the heart of man. Like an epidemic or sweeping mass hysteria, hopelessness has spread across the world of man, extinguishing faith and tolerance.

It is this hopelessness that prevents mankind from carrying out those traditional activities which were carried out over the ages with only hope as the motivation. Such action had kept mankind evolving harmoniously, as a part of nature.

If the social strife, injustice and violence in today's world is blamed on erosion of value systems, we rarely retrace further and search out the root cause, i.e. the death of hope in the heart of mankind. Even more rarely do we see the imbalance in the man-nature relationship as a cause of our growing sense of hopelessness.

*We live in a world of economic realities, of extreme short-term investments and material unsustainable profits for a few years. In the process we refuse to look at the long-term, at times permanent, capital loss. Even in short-term estimates there are mounting losses for the majority in both quality and quantity.*

If in today's world, where we also have the technological might to change anything and everything, we refuse to keep even a part of what we inherited as our natural heritage in wilderness, wildlife or cultural heterogeneity, it is partly because we have no faith in the

future, no hope, no generosity to leave anything for anyone else, even our own posterity.

We are in a hurry to use it all up, to squander as we please, as if there will not be any tomorrow. It is like a greedy man condemned to death wanting to have a last fling at all the things he desired in his life.

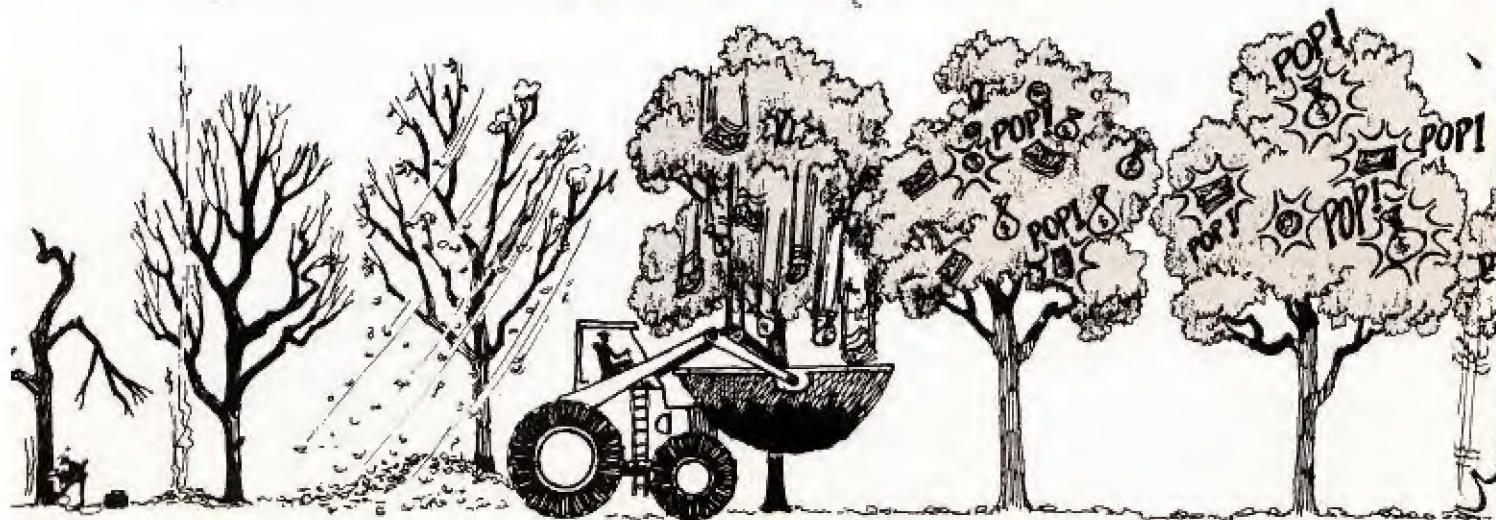
We will not plant a tree that requires centuries of time for reaching maturity. We do not have the patience even for common trees which need decades of time for flowering and fruiting, even though they may live and bear their bounty for generations of human beings. We are busy creating in our wisdom, quick yielding varieties which would yield fruits in three or four years, but would die out in a decade.

We would jubilantly dam and drown a wild river flowing for millions of years for a few paltry megawatts which could be generated for hardly a quarter of a century, before silt buries it all.

A mountain, old as time and as rich as all the richness only nature can provide, will be skinned alive and left a gaunt lifeless hulk in a few years of harvesting timber or cardamom or tapioca.

We live in a world of economic realities, of extreme short-term investments and material unsustainable profits for a few years. In the process we refuse to look at the long-term, at times permanent, capital loss. Even in short-term estimates there are mounting losses for the majority in both quality and quantity.

It is not always because we have not known the consequences. It is often because we choose not to consider the





long-term prospects - the future. The future which is compulsory heritage for the coming generations is optional choice for ourselves. We could mould it selfishly for ourselves alone, or generously for us and our offsprings, too.

For the living world to continue

*At least some human beings have to continue to be utterly unselfish, never to despair and carry on doing and living for the future with only hope as the reward.*

(which invariably includes us) beyond this age of hopeless despair, avarice, selfishness, cynical injustice and violence, a blind hope and faith in goodness are essential. At least some human beings have to continue to be utterly unselfish, never to despair and carry on doing and living for the future with only hope as the reward. This spark of hope they have to keep burning bright within them, saying it from being snuffed out.

All the land may turn into a poisoned desert. The very last seedling may be trampled down by men in meaningless violence. Yet some have to continue nurturing the seeds and the soil, which are nature's symbols of hope. Some will have to continue to feel and care for all other living things and also those yet to be born. This, in stark colours, is what conservation is all about.

Courtesy: INTACH

# A BOOST TO THE ENVIRONMENT

KUMUD KUMAR DAS & CHANDANA CHAKRAVORTY

**T**he proposed construction of a Super Thermal Power Plant (STPP) at North Karanpura (Ranchi District) has been turned down by the Ministry of Environment and Forests. This decision of the Ministry is being regarded as a major achievement in the fight for the conservation of the environment in the Chotanagpur plateau. It is to be noted that the government had already sanctioned the setting up of the STPP at the proposed site of North Karanpura. Now the National Thermal Power Corporation (NTPC) has been directed to shift the proposed project to an alternative site in conformity with environmental guidelines framed by the Environment Ministry. This has been conveyed by the Ministry of Environment and Forests to Mr. Bulu Imam, Convener, INTACH, Hazaribagh Regional Chapter.

The STPP, as envisaged by the NTPC was to be built at an

estimated cost of Rs.500 crores. The 2000 MW electricity generated by the proposed plant would mostly have fed distant cities and towns. The NTPC had already embarked upon requisition of land for the purpose of construction of the plant. According to the reports available, the land-holders of the proposed site were being compensated at the rate of Rs.600 per acre,

*The distressed villagers had lodged several protests to the concerned officials but to no avail. In addition, no alternate arrangements were provided for their rehabilitation and livelihood.*





which is much less than the prevailing rate. The distressed villagers had lodged several protests to the concerned officials but to no avail. In addition, no alternate arrangements were provided for their rehabilitation and livelihood.

The fight was taken up by the Hazaribagh Chapter of INTACH in all earnest. Last year a cycle rally was organised to spread the message of conservation of the environment and to bring home to the villagers the adverse effects of the proposed power plant. A detailed survey report was sent to the then Minister of State for Environment and Forests, Maneka Gandhi. She had assured of her personal intervention in the case.

The Secretary, Ministry of Environment and Forests, Dr. U.Sreedharan, submitted his findings to the Ministry after conducting a survey of this region. He had clearly indicted the NTPC and other concerned authorities for blatantly ignoring the environmental aspect and flouting the laid down norms. This was done to maintain a steady supply of coal (which is available in the region in abundance) by making use of the "merry-go-round" method. Erection of a dam on the river Damodar was also visualised for maintenance of the Plant. The combined effect on the nearby forests, human, animal and aquatic-life would have been deleterious to say the least.

It is reliably learnt that the Plant was to be set up at Navinagar in Aurangabad district of Bihar. Later, it was shifted back to North Karanpura at the express desire of Subodh Kant Sahay, the former Minister of State for Home and then M.P. from Ranchi.

*It has been opined that the indiscriminate use of the river resources would have resulted in denudation of the sand to banks by more than 10.5 mts.*

*Ultimately, the river bed would have dried up causing unprecedented water scarcity to the villages and towns lying on its bank. So far as the displacement of the hapless villagers is concerned*



The Plant was to be constructed in two phases with Australian collaboration. In this connection, an agreement was arrived at between the two countries by which a loan in three instalments had been made available by the other country. The interest is being accrued from 1990 onwards. After completion, approximately 50 million tonnes of coal would have been consumed by the Plant per annum. The coal for this purpose was to be mined extensively in collaboration with a Sydney based firm, White Industries.

If the STPP had come up at the proposed site, it would have a disastrous effect on the water-level of the Damodar river. The Plant on its completion would have laid barren the river as well as the forest-cover by its banks. It would have used up gallons of water and tonnes of sand. It has been opined that the indiscriminate use of the river resources would have resulted in denudation of the sand banks by more than 10.5 mts. Ultimately, the river bed would have dried up causing unprecedented water scarcity to the villages and towns lying on its bank. As far as the displacement of the hapless villagers is concerned, the unabated coal-mining activities under Central Coalfields Limited (C.C.L.) are mercilessly rooting out the "terrae filius", sons of the soils. The proposed STPP would have uprooted innumerable villagers causing unmitigated miseries.

A recent study conducted by a group of experts from the Central Mine Planning and Design Institute, Ranchi, has revealed that at least 75% of the dispossessed villagers would have become virtual refugees.

In a letter dated, December 31st, 1991, Bulu Imam writes:

"The earlier plan of setting up a Super Thermal Power Plant (STPP) by the NTPC has been rejected. However, a new plan to set up another STPP in the North Karanpura Valley is in the pipeline. This project may be situated at Gondalpur, near Badam which is only ten kilometres away from an archaeological site in the valley. The river at Gondalpur is the Badmi

which flows into the the East Haharo, eventually joining the Damodar. I had warned of such action to Mrs. Maneka Gandhi last year, and in the face of recent World Bank pressures on the NTPC who has huge unpaid loans, the matter is now 'life and death' and a new STPP imminent. I have also requested Mr. Kamal Nath, Minister for Environment, to set up an enquiry into making archaeological permission mandatory."

*If you wish to send us reports on social, economic, environmental, development and human rights issues, we will welcome them. Photographs should preferably accompany your reports.*



# JAN VIKAS ANDOLAN

*A Working Perspective*

SMITU KOTHARI

*"The voluntary Sector" as we know it today came into existence to fill the gaps of State failure. The very fact that the people who comprise this sector are "voluntary" gives a new dimension to their cause, namely that of selflessness. The strength and conviction behind voluntarism have been known to create powerful waves of change in all societies and in the process have shown up rare individuals of character and refinement. THE EYE gratefully acknowledges voluntary movements all over the world and wishes to feature them and learn from them in the following issues.*

On 28th September, 1989, a historic National Rally Against Destructive Development took place at Harsud in Madhya Pradesh. Over 60,000 people from all over the country participated. As a follow-up, representatives of mass organisations, activists and other support groups met at Bhopal on 1st and 2nd December 1989 to discuss the possibility of initiating a more organised national process on the issues raised at Harsud.



provide a forum to these dispersed activities so as to facilitate a more organised collective political alternative.

In a general sense, Jan Vikas Andolan is a movement against the development paradigm being practised in post-independence India whereby a narrow elite primarily benefits at the cost of a very large population that continues to be marginalised, displaced and pauperised, along with the large scale degradation and plundering of our natural resource base.

The formation of the Jan Vikas Andolan, JVA is an outcome of this process. In the intervening 15 months, the JVA has held several national meetings in support of on going struggles. It has participated significant initiatives like the recently concluded Manya Prantha Chaitanya Yatra (Eastern Ghats March) and organised a Samvad Yatra in Gujarat to discuss the complex ecological problems of the state. Several units of JVA have also been formed, notably those in Karnataka, Andhra Pradesh and Tehri.

A draft perspective statement was circulated and debated. The following statement attempts to present this perspective.

The formation of the Jan Vikas movements, organisations and individuals, has its roots in a variety of struggles taking place in the country, around issues like the National Test Range at Baliapal, the Koel Karo, Subernarekha, Tehri and Narmada dams, the Kaiga

and Narora nuclear power plants, the widespread alienation of lands, the loss of access to common property resources and of control over productive resources on our coasts and forest areas and other such 'developments'.

Various meetings and discussions both prior to the Harsud rally and after the formation of JVA, have strengthened the understanding that these issues, seen together, are maladies of the prevalent development process. A wide range of activities are also underway to evolve alternatives to this process. Concrete micro-level strategies, as well as outlining of specific institutional and political structures are currently being practised all over the country. Much of this is scattered. Ideological, historical and/or personal differences - real or perceived, have kept these alternatives fragmented severely, restricting any systemic impact on larger economic and political structures. The JVA is one attempt to

considering of our natural resource base. The movement maintains that much of what today goes under the name of development is in fact socially unjust, biologically and genetically homogenising and environmentally destructive. The Andolan's commitment is to a process that strives to achieve social justice and environmental sustainability in which the overriding objective is not aggregate growth regardless of its social, cultural and environmental costs, but the fulfillment of basic human needs universally, the respect of multiple traditions and diversities and the creation of just and humane conditions of life for all our people.

Specifically, the Andolan holds the view that ecological disruption and the rapid depletion and degradation of natural resources, be that of forests, land, water or air goes hand in hand with oppression and exploitation of the expanding base of weaker sections of society. The Andolan believes that



ecological problems arise largely where some injustice or human exploitation is present - where those who profit from a destructive action are not the same as those who have to pay for it and bear the consequences. Behind our exploitation of nature often lies our exploitation of each other. By taking away the traditional rights of millions of tribals and small and marginal farmers from subsistence use of natural resources for sustaining the present path of development, the contentious benefits are derived at the cost of enormous suffering to the affected population and massive overuse and degradation of the surrounding natural resources. Such ecological concerns, therefore, are not a mere hobby of a few middle class urban people, but an articulation of a sense of exploitation and anger of millions of Indians. It is apparent that for the rich, the benefits are to be seen as a further improvement in the generation of surplus and in their lifestyles, whereas for the poor, it is a question of subsistence from resources that were traditionally theirs. If these contending claims are not urgently addressed to and these trends are sustained in the name of 'national interests', the Andolan feels that there will be an escalation of economic conflict with an attendant increase in social and political violence.

Any democratic process of sorting out these contending claims is totally steamrolled by the very nature of the contemporary planning and execution within the dominant developmental process. In most instances, the decisions emanate from New Delhi or from the offices of donors or multilateral banks like the World Bank. This precludes an approach of involving the local population in the decision making process. The Andolan views the process of deciding about the fate of large populations without their knowledge, understanding and consent as not just a serious human rights issue, but also an ethical and moral one.

The acquisition of newer and more modern technology is generally considered as an indicator of development. However, such acquisition and imposition has, in most cases, brutally swamped and negated other technologies which have already existed or which could have been developed in relative harmony not only with local skills and needs, but also with nature and natural

processes. One of the subsumed doctrines of the existing developmental process is that science and technology are value neutral entities and it depends on the decision makers to put it to good use.

The Andolan contends that this use (abuse) model of science and technology is fundamentally flawed. Technology, in particular, when mediated by most researchers, technocrats, contractors, and the bureaucracy - all belonging to a particular section of the society - is heavily value loaded towards the furtherance of the interests of that section. Therefore, the justification for 'latest' technology for 'faster' development is highly questionable. The example of large scale irrigation projects and heavy investments in the fertilizer industry to support intensive agriculture based on hybrid seeds adequately illustrates this. These strategies have brought about a dubious revolution. Though it is claimed that it has resulted in self-sufficiency in food, about 40 percent of the population has practically no access to such bounty. The dependence on hybrid seeds has reached such proportions that last year, as a consequence of the new seed import policy, several major multinationals are now holding us to ransom in germ plasma (for instance, one single company, United Brands, now owns 70 percent of banana germ plasma). In fact, biotechnology is an area where wrong policies and projects can have serious consequences not only to the country's genetic resources but to self reliance, an ideal often hailed but systematically mauled by current developmental policies and strategies.

Another aspect of concern is our rapid militarization - both for dealing with internal unrest and for 'national security' - which, as is evident from the first world countries, goes hand in hand with the kind of developmental paradigm they have followed and which we are trying so disastrously to imitate. This has further legitimised centralised control and distanced the citizen from the state. Democratic dissent and an assertion of the Constitutional right to life is being increasingly treated as a law and order problem. Movements to restore local control over productive natural resources have faced severe state repression. Public accountability and democratic process have thus been further undermined.

The Andolan therefore not only questions these priorities but also views the stated objective of peaceful uses of nuclear energy with grave skepticism, in addition to the known hazards of nuclear power generation. If the pattern of development continues on the present path, it seems natural, having opted to become a dominant member within the global economy, that the multinational - military - industrial combine will further penetrate our national and our personal lives. It is the view of the andolan that an alternative approach to development must give pride of place to ecological restoration, fundamentally, redefining the development process and giving it a new direction. This is the historic challenge we face - and ecology is at the heart of it. It is becoming increasingly clear that the ecological perspective shows us the way to end poverty and achieve a balanced and sustainable development of all our people.

Such an alternative approach to development could ensure that community control, non-centralized planning and execution, information sharing, a proper understanding of needs as opposed to wants and sustainability, become working principles rather than mere platitudes as they are now.

The Andolan is thus committed to facilitate four main tasks to strengthen the struggles for a just, democratic and ecologically sane alternative to the present model of development.

1. Coordinate collective action both as a celebration and as a critique to existing policies, laws and actions of the state which violate the fundamental right to life.

2. Provide national solidarity to these struggles.

3. Mobilise wider public opinion all over the country on the issues mentioned in this statement and

4. Prepare a People's Blueprint for the future - a comprehensive document which will lay out in a historical, social, economic, cultural and ecological perspective the shape of an alternative future for our society. ●

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**W**ords are the currency of everyday communication. They are the foundations on which we build the realities of our civilization. However, language can be used not only to convey meaning, but to obscure truth. Therefore, it is useful to be alert to the way in which words are used to manipulate us into acceptance of unpleasant realities. George Orwell's nightmare vision of "doublespeak" was all too readily demonstrated by the allied public relations machine and the British press in the Gulf War. Our missiles caused "collateral damage" where Iraqi missiles wrecked "civilian casualties". The allies had "reporting guidelines" whereas the Iraqis "imposed censorship". We "took out", but they "killed or destroyed". Most people know that the first casualty of war is the truth, but they are not aware of the pernicious devaluation of language which occurs as a means of manipulation and coercion in peacetime. So, as India's debt crisis spirals to \$ 72 billion (the third highest in the world after Mexico and Brazil), it may be pertinent to take a critical look at the words "progress and development". Behind the glossy facade of consumer happiness and industrial expansion lurk some nasty truths which need closer scrutiny.

A few weeks ago I found an old school text book dated 1926. It is called, "Geography through map-reading : The British Empire". Even the most casual glance at this little book is enough to show that the expansion of powerful European nations as colonial empires served many purposes, not least, the establishment of colossal new markets for manufactured goods, an abundant source of raw materials, and ready access to cheap labour. European arrogance was underpinned by industrial supremacy and the notion of scientific progress as the pinnacle of human achievement. However, as former colonies around the world began to demand independence from European power, it is interesting to note how the industrialised nations maintained technical and economic superiority. Language was central to the change of perception which accompanied political changes. Colonial exploitation, (which held benefits for the few at the expense of the many), was no longer tenable in

# THE MYTH OF PROGRESS AND DEVELOPMENT

MALCOLM BALDWIN

this liberated world, so it was replaced by the notion of "development." Here was a new world order where, (theoretically at least) everyone could reap the benefits of unlimited economic expansion. The myth of universal prosperity in a technological paradise is now taken for granted all over the world. The reality is different as Vandana Shiva points out, "When coloni-

industrial nations. In theory, everyone should benefit from the trickle down of wealth which is supposed to occur, but with 46% of the world's population in varying degrees of poverty, it might be time to question whether the system is working very well.

Currently, 20% of the world's population consumes 80% of its resources, while about half of the world's population still does not have access to clean drinking water. So, in spite of decades of economic "development", millions of people all over the world have yet to experience the benefits of this pernicious myth. In an ironical twist of vision, Northern industrial superpowers still refer to the South as "developing nations", and all their multitudinous problems are seen purely within the restricted framework of economic expansion. Civilization is measured by the level of production. Such cultural imperialism is rarely questioned; there is a tacit assumption that western notions of development are right and good, and that all other visions of human condition are outdated and backward. The tragedy is further compounded when development schemes are financed, which succeed in further impoverishing the very people they were intended to help.

In the seventies, the banks rushed to lend development money to the Phillipine government. Having forcibly evicted the inhabitants of Morong Town in the Bataan Peninsula, the Marcos regime commissioned Westinghouse to build a nuclear power station at a cost of two billion dollars in an earthquake zone, near a dormant volcano. By 1988, the interest

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alism was given the new name of "development," the processes of exploitation were made all pervasive across the board, across space, everywhere. Everything had to be developed."

In this context, the word, "development" has become synonymous with economic growth. The Third World has been continuously "developed" since the Second World War in the hope of creating new markets for the Western



***Interpol is currently investigating a grim trade in children who are "exported" to Europe under the guise of adoption, where they are maintained alive until their organs are needed for transplant. They are said to fetch between six and twelve thousand pounds depending on colour and state of health.***

repayments alone amounted to 350,000 dollars a week. It has not yet produced a single watt of electricity, and it probably never will. A few miles to the east, the slums of Manila bear witness to such folly. The journalist, Peter Hillmore was recently propositioned by a nine year old girl called, Cecilia. She grabbed his hand and said, "Would you like to go to bed with me?" "But you're too small," he blustered. "Yes, but I'm big in bed," replied the girl. Her mother looked on, smiling encouragement. There are 60,000 street children in Manila; worldwide, there are twelve million.

Such examples can be multiplied. It is gradually becoming clear that the price of "development" is beginning to cause a total breakdown in the fabric of society. In Brazil, teams of vigilants (including off-duty policeman) roam the streets at night, shooting street children who have turned to petty crime in order to survive. Interpol is currently investigating a grim trade in children who are "exported" to Europe under the guise of adoption, where they are maintained alive until their organs are needed for transplant. They are said to fetch between six and twelve thousand

pounds depending on colour and state of health.

It is not only in the Third World that the myth of industrial progress and economic development needs careful scrutiny. In the USA, cities like New York are close to the edge of bankruptcy, and can boast of increasing scenes of urban degradation alongside the shining facades of industrial progress. The economic boom of the Thatcher era in Britain has been accompanied by a 79% growth rate in reported crime. The streets of London are no longer paved with gold, but with homeless people sleeping out in the bitter cold of winter. We still cling to the myth of progress and development without ever critically examining how these powerful ideas are being put into practice. In four decades of "development" it is estimated that fifteen million people have been wrenched from India's soil with all the irreversible loss of meaning that it entails. We still measure "development" in terms of shining technological achievement and fail to see that one fifth of all humanity lives in the abyss of dire poverty. The Narmada and Tehri dam schemes will force unnumbered thousands of people into the burgeoning slums of India's cities, and yet their construction is boldly heralded as a new era of progress. UNICEF estimates that half a million children die each year as a direct consequence of the debts accrued from schemes like these. Is this how we measure progress? Is this what we call, "development"?

It is clear that the myth of progress and development has been monstrously distorted, and the words need to be recharged with new meaning before tragedy compounds upon tragedy. Satellite pictures of this planet remind us in a particularly vivid manner that our boundaries are finite, and that progress can no longer be measured in terms of unlimited economic growth. This is not to say we should not use the enormous benefits of the industrial system to full advantage, but when progress turns in on itself and begins to destroy the material wealth of the planet on which we all depend, then it is time to look critically at these forces which threaten the annihilation of civilization.

My geography text book is now nearly seventy years old, and during

that time the notion of progress and development has captured the modern imagination, replacing the colonial drives of the nineteenth century. Neither idea has proved useful beyond rather limited boundaries. Maybe it is now time to redefine these ideas in terms of the progress of the human spirit where all life is given the dignity to co-exist in harmony. Maybe it is time to understand that growth is not merely confined to the choice of brightly coloured packages on the supermarket shelves. Maybe we should recognise that soil, air, water and bio-diversity are the true wealth of this planet, and that the progress of humankind is linked to all living things. When we begin to understand that, then there is hope for the millions of deprived people, hope that little Cecilia might regain her lost childhood. ●

*Malcolm Baldwin is a gifted teacher, writer and a dedicated environmentalist. Born in the U.K., he has a B.Ed degree from the University of Sussex. He has worked in Theatre and as Film Editor mainly for BBC T.V. He has been cameraman and director for several BBC productions. He is deeply committed to organizations such as Green Peace, Friends of the Earth, Environmental Investigation Agency and has produced Environmental educational material. He is currently employed with the Cornwall Energy Project.*

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# 'GOD DOES NOT PLAY DICE WITH THE UNIVERSE' OR DOES HE ?

COSMOLOGY, BLACK HOLES,  
AND BELIEFS.



PROF. A.M. DIGHE

*One can accurately predict the time of the solar eclipse, foresee the tidal effects of the moon, calculate the velocity required of an object to escape earth's gravity and even announce with precision the next arrival of Hailey's comet.*

One of the renowned scientists of this century, an expert on Black Hole Dynamics from Cambridge University, Stephen Hawking throws a bombshell on the minds of the scientific community, shaking the very grounds upon which they had built a beautiful and predictable world of modern science.

Dismissing Einstein's belief that the Universe had an order, that in principle it was discoverable, Hawking has the guts to make the scientists believe in the contrary, and that what they thought they knew, is all wrong! A galaxy of world experts on

science including the faculty of California Institute of Technology are only too obliged to listen to a startling research:

**"BREAK DOWN OF PHYSICS IN THE REGION OF SPACE-TIME SINGULARITY".**

Stephen Hawking suffers from a nervous system disorder, is on a wheeled chair, has impaired speech - and is not sorry for himself. In pin-drop silence the audience listens on to a heavily slurred voice..... Stephen Hawking manages to provoke the mightiest rational mind into a complete disbelief in the ability of science to dig into the mysteries of the Universe.....

Our Universe is very young - 'hardly' ten billion years of age - and there are several tens of billions of years to go before a catastrophic cosmic event plunges it back into the oblivion of nothingness. Then there would probably be a Big Bang again..... Matter and energy in all possible forms will begin to emerge and manifest itself in the way it does today.

I would rather quickly believe in whosoever said that Life is short and Art is long. Human life is indeed very short, the Art of the supreme creator very long, very huge and above all it is very, very obscure. In fact, so obscure is the mystery of this Universe, that it



continues to baffle the greatest scientific mind even today, as it did the raw mind of the prehistoric man, who, out of fear of lightning, the fury of oceanic storms and the fire of the blazing sun, originated the first seedling of an idea of something called God. Psychologists say that a part of our behaviour is still traceable back to the genes of our prehistoric ancestors - and thus we continue to believe in God. Curiosity about Nature has accompanied man ever since. The evolution of civilizations witnessed this quest of rediscovering Nature and that is why we are today what we are. Now that our scientific knowledge has unfolded new horizons on the cosmic landscape, the mystery of the Universe prevails upon our minds with ever greater impact.

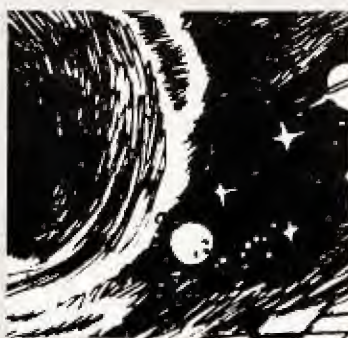
One may be reasonably justified in claiming that the true scientific era began with Newton, who with a powerful insight shaped our concepts of Mass, Gravitation and Force, putting them succinctly in a set of equations called, Newton's Laws of Motion. These laws provided the basic mathematical arsenal, with which one could successfully fight the problems of mechanics on a terrestrial level and a little beyond.

One can accurately predict the time of the solar eclipse, foresee the tidal effects of the moon, calculate the velocity required of an object to escape earth's gravity and even announce with precision the next arrival of Hailey's comet. There is an element of permanence in the perfection of these laws that allows their utility even today in solving our engineering problems - be it a bridge across a river, an IC engine, or the modern satellite - obliging the technology thus developed to eventually owe itself to the ingenuity of these laws. There is no wonder therefore, that the scientific community has already signed its final agreement with the perfection of Science and its dependability. This is not to suggest that the progress of science was ever very smooth and without its clashes with contemporary religious beliefs. Yet, science progressed and so did society, especially the Western society.

However, the so called perfection in Newton's Laws was destined to be limited only to terrestrial level prob-

lems. When applied to the enormity of the cosmic scale of distances, masses and energies, Newton's arsenal possessed merely the capability of a Viking's catapult where a computer aided missile was actually needed. Newton's Laws failed mainly on three accounts. His concept of the identity of inertial and gravitational mass gave misleading results for particles accelerated to great velocities. A gravitational mass corresponds to the universally attractive force of gravitation while an inertial mass represents resistance to motion.

*A very simple experiment by Galileo. A huge iron ball and a small cork ball dropped from the same height reached the ground at the same time, presuming that no air friction existed. At very high velocities however, objects appeared more massive'. The discrepancy was far too big to permit the alibi of measurement errors.*



This identity was established in a very simple experiment by Galileo. A huge iron ball and a small cork ball dropped from the same height reached the ground at the same time, presuming that no air friction existed. At very

high velocities however, objects appeared more massive. The discrepancy was far too big to permit the alibi of measurement errors. Secondly, Newton's concept of "flat space" was in direct conflict with the trigonometric observations at very large distances. Any triangle over a flat space will provide angles whose sum is always 180° exactly. Now the cosmic triangles formed by three distant stars many light years away did not conform to this result, thus requiring fresh thinking on the nature of space. Thirdly, the fact that the finite velocity of light could play tricks with celestial observations did not occur to Newton. A cosmic event like the birth of a star at a remote corner of a galaxy would be reported by distant observers at different times simply because light would take its own time, traversing tirelessly across incomprehensible, vast distances.

The discovery of an earth-size planet in the Milky Way was in the news recently. If the planet is a thousand light years away, then what we have observed is just what it was a thousand years back. We shall continue to witness this history of cosmic magic of the starry heavens till the last ray of light has faded from our view.

Einstein improved upon Newton's mathematics, revolutionizing our concepts of mass, space and time. None of these entities are the same as we ordinary people conceive them to be. Thus, space is curved, its curvature affected by a huge mass, mass increases with velocity, and that time is not an even flowing entity for all observers - are only some of the tenets of Einstein's Relativity Theory. He predicted that the gravitational pull of a huge mass could exercise itself on the fastest moving object - i.e. light - bending it as it passed by, to make the apparent position of a star look different from its actual location! The entire world waited in expectation for the Total Solar Eclipse of 1919 to provide conclusive proof, which was beyond any doubt. He became a celebrity overnight for the perfection of this prediction. Reading through the heap of telegrams which contained messages of congratulations, Einstein remained nonchalant. He also gave us the equivalence of matter and energy in the sheer simplicity of an equation like  $E = mc^2$



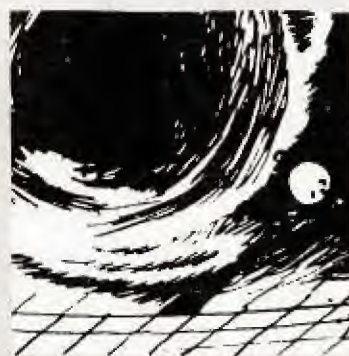
whose testing ground was to be Hiroshima and Nagasaki on 6th and 9th Aug. 1945. With such convincing proofs the predictability of Science once again received the veritable sanction of belief by rational society - but not without the full comprehension of the second edge of this weapon.

**T**he early history of cosmological theories beginning as far back as 300 BC with Aristotle till the 17th century of Galileo, witnessed a typical conflict of trust between the Church and Science. Theology, religion and philosophy entitled themselves alone for addressing the question of the beginning of creation while Science was relegated to interpreting whatever happened in the existing world by the physical laws that governed it. In spite of the fact that Newton's Theory of Gravitation itself precluded an "Infinite Static Universe", the general climate of belief was in favour of a corresponding Eternal Universe - a belief which even Einstein could not get rid of - not to speak of the relatively recent Hoyle - Narlikar theory of a "Steady State Universe". Hubble's observations in 1929 of the galaxies speeding away from each other led to the now generally accepted concept of The Expanding Universe. In fact, this observation also brought the subject of the Beginning in the realm of science as it nearly implied that the expansion started off a Big Bang.

With all the spade work from Einstein's theories and the insights supplied by quantum mechanics, the mathematical models of the universe tend to take us some 10-15 billions of years back, right into the very mystical beginning before which Time did not exist. The interpolation of observable cosmic events, on the other hand, back to the Big Bang, is a near impossible task any way, and at best we can only guess what might have happened. A picturesque description of this process is - to quote Dr. Jagjit Singh from his 'Modern Cosmology': "The evolution of the world can be compared to fire works that have just ended: some few red wisps, ashes and smoke. Standing on a well-chilled cinder we see the slow fading of suns and try to recall the vanished brilliance of the origin of the world. Can we construct a more de-

tailed picture of this 'vanished brilliance' by an examination of the cinder, ashes and smoke very much as archaeologists do by digging into the debris of lost civilizations?"

It is not surprising, therefore, that cosmological theories are often fraught with the contradictions of subjective judgement involving an element of speculation. New cosmic events indicated by radioastronomical data continue to demand fresh interpretations



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requiring ad-hoc changes in theories, thus throwing the objectivity of physics at cross roads.

**T**he discovery of Quasars, millions of light years away, had initially raised hopes of a fresh insight into the rival theories of cosmic evolution. But contrary to being arbiters among the ri-

vals, these obscure radio objects managed only to escalate the differences - for a good reason though. The reason was, their prodigal energy outputs, being gigantic even on a cosmic scale, could not be accounted for by the kind of energies associated with the thermonuclear reactions of burning stars. The only way such energies could be released was by a gravitational collapse of matter where  $E = mc^2$  in its very raw form would reign supreme against all other natural forces!

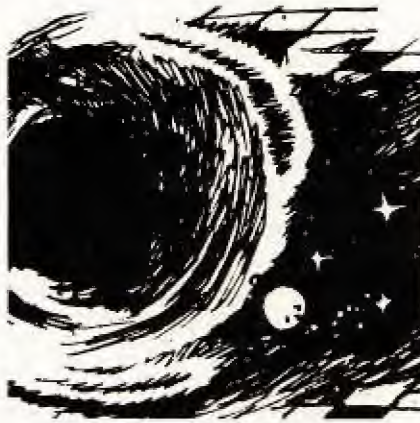
A star like our sun is in equilibrium against self-gravitational pulls due to the pressures of thermonuclear reactions inside. Fusing hydrogen as a fuel, enormous energy is produced to create helium as ash. Once Hydrogen has been burnt out, Helium begins to fuse, to produce heavier elements raising central temperatures to millions of degrees celsius. This chain breaks even iron which absorbs energy for burning. When a star has thus consumed its fuel it can collapse under its own weight. In the absence of thermonuclear reactions, the electromagnetic forces binding atoms and molecules together, and the nuclear forces holding the nuclei, become defenseless against the single aggregate of the gravitational pull towards the centre. The result is a super dense matter stripped of all charges - electrons falling into nuclei to create neutrons - called the neutron star.

Matter, having now surrendered its only weapon can get even further crushed provided the initial mass of the star exceeded about 1.5 solar masses - the so called Chandrashekhar limit - beyond which the super dense matter reaches unimaginable limits of near extinction. What follows is called a Black Hole with enormous gravity around and a size unthinkable small on the cosmic scale. Imagine the Sun compressed to only 3 kilometers in diameter! (Perish the thought!).

The gravitational pull of a black hole is so great that even light once entered cannot escape. Thus no communication is possible for an outsider to establish this entity. Then how on earth, did we find them out? This is a paradox beyond ordinary imagination and would not be resolved but for the strong gravitational footprint a black hole leaves behind. The situation is somewhat live, trying to measure the



temperature of the sun by using an ordinary glass thermometer - you would land up losing your measuring tool. In this way, none of the known laws of physics and mechanics would hold inside a black hole. That is why it is called a 'singularity' in mathematics - something very queer where your equations won't fit at all. To give an analogy, imagine that we are all two-dimensional creatures like the 'flatus' of Asimov's science fiction. We have perfected our maths and 'technology' of the two dimensions. Suddenly we find that an equation, say of a circle, fails to fit at a remote point on its circumference - just because there is a hole in the graph paper (!) I cannot locate a point there and hence call it a singularity. Also, the hole in a two-dimensional space would allow the Flatus an entry into the new world of three dimensions. The black holes are similarly called Space-Time Gates and can carry us into a universe entirely different from our own - through the forth dimension. Inside a black hole strange things can happen : Time reverses.... Space folds upon itself..... Above all, a black hole can emit ANYTHING - just anything - in the course of time. The thermodynamic probability predicts all sorts of particle combinations and thus includes every form of creation. It might take billions of years for a bizarre form



to be realized at the infinitesimally small probability, but it should come through - in the course of time. Are we not the proof ourselves? Our existence, might, after all be that freak accident which even the lowest thermodynamic probability could not preclude. The infinity of life-forms around us, in all shapes, sizes, sounds, colours and fragrances - did it not all emerge from the Big Bang Singularity?

Defying the laws of physics, the black hole mystery manages to trespass mighty minds, escaping unfathomed. At the momentous Beginning inside the singularity, the so far known four natural forces merge into that mystical Unity which Science has yet to discover.

When the breakdown of physics is

complete, given the authenticity of Hawking, the conclusions can be very disturbing. Though a rationalist will not permit himself the lawlessness just because the universe is so, he will be left wondering at the predicament of a changeover from a scientific belief to an act of faith.

It appears therefore, that without invoking philosophical abstraction, the mystery of this Universe cannot even be discussed, let alone understood. That is why Einstein had once remarked: "God does not play dice with the Universe". Conveying a sharp contrast Hawking adds "Not only does he play dice with the Universe, sometimes He throws them away where we can't find them!"

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## CHIPKO INFORMATION CENTRE

SERAIN via TEHRI PIN 249001 TEHRI-GARHWAL U.P. (HIMALAYA) INDIA.

### APPEAL FOR THE EARTHQUAKE-STRICKEN PEOPLE OF UTTARKASHI & TEHRI GARHWAL

*We are sending this appeal to you on behalf of earthquake victims of Garhwal Himalaya. The miseries, which this mishap has brought upon the simple hill-folk cannot be described in words. It has generated a wave of sympathy in the whole country, but the magnitude of disaster is so great that we need international help. About 10,000 families are to be provided temporary shelter immediately. The cost of tin sheets for one shelter will come to about US \$ 250.*

*We have co-ordinated it with the environmental protection movement. The press has come out in full support of our stand on Tehri Dam.*

*The amount of help may be sent to PARVATIYA NAVJEEVAN MANDAL, SILYARA, Tehri Garhwal, PIN-249 155, through STATE BANK OF INDIA, GHANSALI, TEHRI-GARHWAL (U.P.). Please send this appeal to all friends of Chipko in your country and the neighboring countries.*

*The Silyara Ashram buildings and library which were the headquarters of the Chipko movement and where many of you have visited, are completely destroyed. Books on ecology, environment and mountains will be welcome.*

*Yours Sincerely,  
(SUNDERLAL BAHUGUNA)*



# INDIA SEEN AFAR

KATHLEEN RAINE

*The author narrates the story of how she discovered India.*

I visited India for the first time when I had already fulfilled the term of years the Bible allots to humankind. I did not go professionally, or to promote some cause, or to undertake some piece of scholarly research, or to sit at the feet of any spiritual Master; still less did I go as a tourist. Like all the most important things in life, being born, or falling in love for example, my arrival in India came to me as something altogether unforeseen, unplanned, unsought.

Believing as I do, that nothing happens by chance, that whatever befalls us has meaning, I can only say that the unknowable purpose of life had all along been leading, and perhaps if this had not been so, I might have made my 'passage to India' sooner. But, better late than never, India had for me the inexplicable quality of an arrival.

I was invited to India, in fact, by the Yeats scholar, Dr Santosh Pal, to give the inaugural lecture to the Yeats Society of India. So my stepping-stone to India was none other than W.B. Yeats, who had himself reached India, the India of the Imagination, late in life, after a long pilgrimage through many states and kingdoms, of realms of literature and the other arts, of folklore and psychical research, of magical studies and philosophy. In the course of his mental journey, Yeats had devoted himself to a forgotten knowledge of all these fields which relate to the inner universe, to those 'facts of mind' which have no part in modern Western materialist culture, as it has



*Like all the most important things in life, being born, or falling in love for example, my arrival in India came to me as something altogether unforeseen, unplanned, unsought.*

been during the last three hundred years. Yeats was learned too, in the older European culture of the imagi-

nation, the Platonic traditions, and laboured to turn the tide of materialism and to reverse the premises of our age. In his last years, Yeats followed an Indian teacher, Sri Purohit Swamy, and in collaboration with him, made a translation of the principal Upanishads. He had planned to follow the Swamy to India, but his health was failing and he was less fortunate than I have been - he never reached the Indian shores. Perhaps that did not matter, for he had already reached the 'India of the Imagination'; and for Yeats too that India had the character of a destination.

But why should I have been following in Yeats' footsteps? More than half of my own life has been devoted to the study of William Blake, who, almost alone in his time, called in question the very premises of modern Western materialism. "Mental things alone

are real", he proclaimed. "What is called corporeal, nobody knows its dwelling-place." And his entire labours were devoted to his "great task", "To open the eternal worlds, To open the immortal eyes of man, inwards, into the worlds of thoughts, into Eternity, of which this vegetable earth is but a shadow."

Blake was a Christian, but a highly unorthodox one by the standards of his day; he was, in fact, a follower of Swedenborg, whom the great Israeli scholar, Henry Corbin, has called, "the Buddha of the West". Blake's and Swedenborg's vision of 'the Divine



Humanity' - the Imagination - bears much resemblance to the great Indian concept of the Universal Self.

So, unknown to me, my own Golden String, by way of Blake, whose prophetic books were first edited by Yeats, had long been leading me to India, the great source from whence knowledge of things of the mind has spread in successive waves to East and West alike, from time immemorial. From Blake to Yeats, to India - I was a late arrival. But without those years of my own labours in following the obscured traces of a lost 'learning of the Imagination' I would not have been ready for India.

Well, I have told the story in my book, *India Seen Afar*. I would claim no nearer view, and each finds our own India. Mine is not a work of expertise, no doubt it is full of inaccuracies of fact. It is not a travel-book in any documentary sense. I wrote some very introspective autobiographical books a long time ago, but this is not an introspective book either, for in every life there are moments when inner and outer events coincide. I don't know on what shelf, if any, the booksellers will display it. I can only say that I enjoyed writing mainly, I suppose, because I did not want to lose so much richness of experience, and after seventy, experience becomes indescribably rich.

Just before I left India on my last visit, in 1979, my friend, Dr. Ramachandra Gandhi, interviewed me on television. His last question was a searching one, "Kathleen, why do you love India?" for I do indeed love India but what India do I love? The India of the political, economic, ecological educational and other spheres of actuality is in just as great a mess as the rest of the world; greater no doubt in some respects, and my first impression of India was of a deeply wounded country, wounded by successive imperialisms, territorial or cultural or economic. And of course, I saw the poverty, the children begging for 'one rupee', the shantytown fringes where industrial and rural poverty meet.

And doubtless there were many things in India, better and worse, that I did not see. On the other hand I did not go as a tourist either, although the generous hospitality of the Indian government, whose guest I was, did enable me to see something of India's inexhaustible treasury. The beauty of India is human; people, old and young, men and women,

and children, the grace of the women in their beautiful saris and jewels, whether of gold or tinsel, bear witness

*The old with their burning eyes, the dancing children, even the poorest, stamped with the collective beauty of a culture that embraces the learned and the illiterate alike.*

*The true beauty of India lies in that culture itself.*



to the value in which beauty is held; the old with their burning eyes, the dancing children, even the poorest, stamped with the collective beauty of a culture that embraces the learned and the illiterate alike. But the true beauty of India lies in that culture itself, as I so richly encountered it in some of the finest minds of India; or rather the great mind of India to which these are dedicated. Much as India may need Western support in many practical matters, it would be a sad day for the whole world were India to succumb to a Westernization of her great culture, from which we in the West have so much to learn. It was India's great novelist, Raja Rao, who said to me, that he saw in India a great flowering, during the last hundred years, of her philosophic and spiritual genius. Something of this I was able to experience, and if India remains true to her heritage there may be hope for all of us.

Well, Ramu Gandhi's question was indeed a hard one to answer. But in reading the *Mahabharata* I had come

upon a parable about Hanuman, the monkey-god whose great deeds are told in the earlier epic poem, the *Ramayana*. In the *Mahabharata* the story told of how the Pandava hero, Bhima, as he climbed into the forests of the Himalayas came upon an old monkey sitting on the ground who told him human beings could not pass any further. Bhima challenges him, and the monkey says, very well, I am old and weak, so just lift my tail out of the path and you may pass. Of course, Bhima cannot lift that tail, and recognizes that this is Hanuman, his half brother, for both are sons of the wind. He then asks Hanuman to tell him about his mar-

vellous feats - how he carried a mountain with its healing herbs to the battle field, and how he leaped from India to Lanka, to Ravana's city. Hanuman replies, that, that was in the golden age. Then, humankind and all creatures had possession and knowledge of their entire universe and themselves; in the silver age, a quarter was lost; and when the heroic age ended, we in the iron age - the *Kali-yuga*, are left knowing only a quarter of reality. "That's it", I felt when I read this account, "That is what it feels like, living now as we are living in only a part of reality. Western materialism knows only a quarter. But in India," I concluded, "there is still a little more than a quarter". It is for that more than a quarter I love 'the India of the Imagination'.

*Kathleen Raine is a writer of international repute. This is an extract from her new book, 'India Seen Afar!' Courtesy: Resurgence Magazine. Pics: Rustam*



# CHALLENGES OF FREEDOM

C.B. MUTHAMMA



**A**s I look at the young people, who are now on the threshold of life, I find myself wondering what vision of life they have and of their place in it. Looking back to the time of my own graduation, I must confess that as far as I can recollect, I had nothing more on my mind than my own immediate prospects and plans. But each new generation is that much further ahead than the last, that much more knowledgeable

and self-assured, and I dare say that young people these days have a much wider perspective than my contemporaries and I had. Even so, it would only be natural for young people starting out in life to be preoccupied with themselves and with their own plans and prospects.

But at some point, most of us begin to realise that even those with no thought of anything but themselves and their own personal concerns, live life at many

levels, consciously or unconsciously. Life is rather like an election - your vote this way or that makes a difference to the outcome, but if you do not vote at all, it still makes a difference. In other words, you cannot opt out.

All of us, individually and collectively, are part of history - we make history - we are history. It is not only the outstanding people or the dramatic events that constitute history. The continuous streams of action, and of choice, of nameless masses of people, constitute the substratum that throws up the individual's notables, whether of persons or of events. In the cave-man period of human history, it would not have been possible to have a St. Francis of Assisi, or an Einstein or, for that matter, even a Hitler. Shakespeare had to be preceded by millions of English speakers, who created the language and millions of contemporaries who spoke it and kept it alive, for him to be able to write in English. Mahatma Gandhi was a great leader because he had a following which he had inherited, which could respond to the same idioms of thinking and living as himself. All of us can think of many countries where he would not have been a leader - countries, which in fact could not even have produced a Gandhi at all.

The present generation faces a period of momentous changes, as my contemporaries in their time did. In fact, I wonder whether there ever was a time in history that was not a period of deep and important changes. My generation was in college during the

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closing years of India's Freedom Movement. In the sheltered tranquillity of our student lives, it was possible to take a distant, even detached view of great national events. But sometimes the struggle came to our doorsteps. I recall the day during the Quit India Movement, when representatives of various student organisations came to our college and called on us to go on strike. Whereas our sympathy with the Freedom Movement was total, I found myself wondering whether this particular way of demonstrating our solidarity was the best. But strike we did and our Principal and staff responded to our confused idealism with great comprehension and friendship.

I can't claim to have had a very clear understanding of the depth and dimensions of the symbiotic relationship between the lives of ourselves as individuals and the National Movement, or, at another level, of the relationship of our National Movement with global changes, the break-up of the imperial system and the many facets and implications of that break-up.

These great movements, national and global, and the many changes triggered off by them are still continuing, though in their new manifestations, in some respects, they are somewhat less obvious and dramatic. But whether we are fully aware of them or not, they affect the lives of all of us and our future.

In this country, as in many others, we still face the challenge of freedom. It has been stated that political freedom was only the first step, and freedom could not be real until economic freedom could be won. This is a self-evident proposition. To the millions of our people who live their lives out in want, misery and insecurity, freedom is a meaningless abstraction. But there are other dimensions of freedom that need to be comprehended if we have to go forward purposefully.

Firstly, the individual's freedom is incomplete in every way if others are condemned to a wretched and captive existence. There is an indirect awareness of this in the great urge of many Indians to go abroad to escape the frustrations of the situation at home. The problem of the inadequacy of opportunities for the individual in this country, whether of education, of employment,



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or of reasonable standards of living, is directly linked to the inadequacy of the totality of choices to the total population. Some of the luckier ones might succeed in escaping to more congenial places. But many will have to remain here. And even those, who go out must ask themselves the question, who is to put things right here? It is not

outsiders, who will come here to build a happy life for us - we have, in fact, only recently freed ourselves from outsiders, who came here and created a situation that was far from happy. It is up to us, especially the privileged few like us on whom the helpless, illiterate, hungry, insecure majority depends, to recognise and accept our responsibilities. There are many people, young and old, who have shown strength, determination, and high idealism, coupled with practical good sense, in identifying and tackling the multifarious problems that face this country. Many of the problems are very visible. We have, for instance, an exploding population that makes nonsense of our progress, widespread deforestation that is steadily turning this rich land into a desert, and above all, a governmental system that makes the processes of political power incompatible with the public good. Whether we recognise these problems or not, none of us can opt out of their effects.

The logic of the commonality of interests extends to the international scene too. Racism would not exist if the coloured peoples severally and collectively were not in such an enfeebled and abject condition. If the Black African countries, or India, were strong and self-reliant, apartheid in South Africa would not be possible; nor would it be possible for South Africa's friends and allies in the West to support apartheid in actual deed while disclaiming it in words. For, in such a situation, whatever economic, political or military advantages they draw from supporting apartheid, would be greatly outweighed by the loss of their interests in the coloured nations which collectively represent incomparably more people, more of the territory of the world, and more of its resources than South Africa. But as long as India, Black Africa and the Third World are dependent on the patronage of the developed countries, and compete with each other for their favours in aid, trade and technology, they have no leverage against the forces that keep apartheid alive.

What is more, the captive resources of the Third World help sustain the economic, military and political dominance of a small group of strong countries, thus perpetuating an unequal



and undemocratic international system in which a few thrive at the cost of the many. It is a widely recognised fact that in this so-called post-colonial era there is a net outflow of resources from the poor countries to the rich, as there was during the colonial period.

Nevertheless, each Third World country, including India, runs a strictly nationalistic policy in rivalry with other poor countries with whom in reality they have a commonality of interest. This is so, though lip-service has been paid for years to the ideal of cooperation among developing countries, and even though the leaders of our Freedom Movement declared that our freedom would be incomplete so long as others remained subjugated.

The second dimension of Freedom that I would like to refer to is that which is at the very heart and core and the *essence* of freedom - Freedom of the Mind. Almost everywhere in the ex-colonial territories, the period of subjugation has destroyed or damaged the self-respect and self-confidence of the subject peoples to the extent that they hold themselves and their cultures, languages and traditions in contempt. I have been in equatorial countries where, notwithstanding the sticky, stifling heat, people have sported three-piece suits with great pride and satisfaction. It is normal practice in our own country to wear closed shoes and socks whereas the traditional open sandals would be much more comfortable and healthy in our hot climate. One has read about a recent incident when a Calcutta club refused entry to some eminent Indians because they arrived in Indian clothes. Can we then blame Churchill who, in his already outdated arrogance half a century ago, made his classic jibe about Gandhiji as the "naked fakir" of India?

These are the rather more obvious, and more mundane instances. There are less obvious and more insidious aspects of what I can only call mental domination. In the early years of the discovery of the great Indian monuments and architectural and artistic masterpieces, the theory was put out that these must have been the works of Greeks - mere Indians could not have produced them. Our music, including our great and highly evolved classical music is "ethnic music." I have even

ucts of an undemocratic, intolerant and exclusivist philosophy.

When the mind becomes subjugated, things that would normally be obvious become invisible. The myth has long been propagated - and accepted unquestioningly - that Christianity is a Western religion. As India's representative to the United Nations remarked some years ago, if Christ were now to appear and go to South Africa, he would be declared an illegal immigrant!

But every so often, the human mind asserts its freedom. The *Nag Hammadi* scripts stand witness to the extraordinary perceptiveness of an early Christian community in Egypt which came to the conclusion that Christ and the Church were not necessarily the same thing.

The issue is that of liberating one's mind from the deadening influence of domination. India, too, has had its failings, including many serious and shameful ones - it could not be otherwise a civilisation that encompassed such a long period and such vast masses of people. But through it all, is a continuous luminous thread of an instinctive understanding and a faith that diversity is normal, not uniformity. In contrast to this is the fierce exclusiveness, xenophobia and rejection of people on the basis of colour, race, religion or other considerations that are even today typical of many countries that project themselves as models for the world.

It is our long tradition of an acceptance of diversity, and an ability and willingness to live in amity with those who are different, which is at the very heart and core of our democracy. Today this magnificent tradition of acceptance is grossly violated in the name of politics in our country.

It is normal human nature to seek to dominate others and more especially normal for the strong to seek to dominate the weak. But the problem really arises when people let themselves be dominated. In fact, most of the formerly subject countries go further and voluntarily put themselves in a subject posture, accepting the dominant countries as models in all matters. One of the most thoughtful and perceptive people of our times, Rukmini Devi Arundale, was asked during her last visit to Delhi a few years ago, "Do you think the British destroyed our



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come across Indians using these definitions. The view is propagated that democracy is a Western invention or discovery, overlooking the slave-based Western societies from ancient Greece to modern America, and contemporary phenomena like Hitler and McCarthy, who were only the better known prod-



culture?" And her reply was, "No, the gulf between the British and us, was so great that they could not do anything to us. But now it is our own youth which is destroying our culture." This is a severe indictment. The late Malcolm Muggeridge of BBC put it differently when he said, that Indians would be the last Englishmen in the world.

We in this country, have less reason and less excuse than most, of meekly subjugating our minds to any form of domination and to perpetuate, by our acceptance, the continuing hegemony. Even in our most abject and decadent periods, this country has produced great and original minds. Even the colonial period had great thinkers - a Ramanujam, a C.V. Raman, a Mahatma Gandhi, a Ramana Maharshi and many others. If we seek to establish in our country and in the world at large, a human community at peace with itself and with the world around it, we have to hark back to the concepts and values that our country has evolved over millennia - concepts and values that must be central to any thinking on the subject.

I have referred earlier, to our distinctive acceptance of diversity as normal. This is what, in very misleading terms, has been described as the unique and magnificent *tolerance* of India. To begin with, "*tolerance*" is a negative concept - that you leave the other fellow alone if he will leave you alone. You "*tolerate*" an unwelcome stranger - you do not tolerate your brother - you identify with him. Such "*tolerance*" is not the reality of our tradition, which is a reverential acceptance of those who are different as an essential, valid and enriching part of the totality.

This approach is seen at its best in India's attitude to that most essential part of the human personality, religion. All religions have been equally revered as different paths to God. There is no bigotry, and, traditionally, no definition of heresy. It is the only country where even atheism is included in the definition of religion. Lord Buddha said nothing about God. The ancient Upanishadic prayer was, 'From the Unreal, lead me to the Real'. So, religion was a search for the Ultimate Reality. It was a definition that denoted simultaneously, the limitless

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spiritual and intellectual horizons of the people of this country.

Secondly, *tolerance* as a concept conforms to a fractured view of life. Who is to be tolerated and by whom? In this country, whose total view of life and the universe has been described by the word "*holistic*", everything is seen as part of a totality, and as a valid part. In its vision of the totality of existence, India has gone beyond an acceptance of only the human community - it has seen the whole of creation as one. 'The whole earth is a family' is an ancient Indian faith which goes further than the most ardent contemporary environmentalist has managed to travel, for the environmentalist's view is coloured by ideas of the *utility* of the earth to Man.

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In our time, we are in the process of deciding whether we preserve all that has been thought and

understood and achieved in the past, and go on to build further on these foundations, or throw it all away and become pale copies of someone else. To be oneself is not to reject others. But to copy and abdicate one's right and ability for this does not accord us with an independent identity. Poet Rabindranath Tagore's beautiful prayer for India's freedom begins, "Where the mind is without fear."

Every people, every civilisation, has its role and its contribution to the sum total of human thought and progress. India has a great past of achievements in many fields and in evolving concepts of an enlightened and civilised society. Let us not give up our freedom of mind and spirit, and lose our identity. It is unworthy of the great civilisation we inherit, and unworthy of our high potential for the future. Let us be free, for the challenges are great, and there is much to be done.

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Illustrations: Rustam

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# THE LETTER SPEAKS...

## THE TAMIL SCRIPT

# நமக்கு

*A language is a pulsating, dynamic medium that has journeyed through time and carried with it its own philosophy, culture and literature. Each language has its worshippers who plumb its depths, paid homage to its sound and out of that sound was born a tradition sacred and rich. In India, we have 15 official languages which we take somewhat for granted. With increasing standardisation of languages through the media and the dominance of some over the others, several of us are unable to identify even a spoken Indian language, leave alone a written one.*

*In this issue, we present a visual depiction of the Tamil script, merely to familiarise ourselves with it. In the process, we hope to pay homage to this ancient language, and to the Saint - poet, Tiruvalluvar who wrote the perennial Tiru Kural. We are grateful to Prof. Indrani Manian, Head of the Department of Tamil, Lady Sri Ram College, Delhi, who leafed through the tomes and to Lakshmi Kannan, writer and poetess, for her translations.*

அறிவு நிறம் காக்கும் கருவி; செறுவார்க்கும்  
உள் அழிக்கல் ஆகா அபண்

True Knowledge is an inner fortification that enemies cannot destroy, and is the ultimate, impregnable defence:

உலகம் தழீஇயது ஒட்பம்; மலர்தலும்  
கும்பலும் இல்லது அறிவு

Knowledge befriends the world. It fosters the spirit of equanimity, saving one from both excitement and depression:

எவ்வது உறைவது உலகம், உலகத்தோடு  
அவ்வது உறைவது அறிவு

The man of True Knowledge understands how the world moves and moves accordingly:



● Scholars who researched on the history of Indian Paleography have made it clear that much before the Aryan Vedas could find a script of its own, there were several other languages that were already being sustained independently by their own scripts. Noteworthy amongst these languages are, Prakriti and Pali from North India and Tamil in South India. The stone edicts of Ashoka's times appear to be the oldest among all the recently discovered stone edicts. One can recognize the script of 'Pali Prakrit' called, *Brahmi*, in those ancient stone edicts which served as a script for many other old languages. Many scholars hold the view that the script found on the rock edicts of Ashoka resembles the script of Tamil.

*Prof. Indrani Manian.*

- Brahmi is a language that borrowed the script from Tamil. In fact, during ancient times, all the spoken languages that had not yet evolved their own script, turned to Tamil, which served as a common script for them. Research in Indian languages show that the cluster of Nagari languages that appeared around 5 A.D. also evolved out of the ancient script of Tamil.

*V. Sivaramamurti, Indian Epigraphy and South Indian Script.*

● The clarity and intricacy in the phonetic and alphabetical arrangement of Tamil may be one reason for its widespread applicability and its enduring genius.

Having a rounded style during the Sangam era, the Tamil letters eventually developed on the basis of straightened lines. *Tolkappiyam* enumerates the number of words in Tamil, their classifications, together with their phonetic combinations. Tolkappiyar, the author of *Tolkappiyam*, who standardised the language of Tamil, was much older than Aśoka. This clearly shows that Brahmi followed the ancient script of Tamil.

*Dr. Burnell, South Indian Paleography.*

- The Tiru Kural has been acclaimed as one of the finest products of Indian culture. Many savants have found it to be an eternal source of inspiration that springs from the perennial philosophy of Indian thought.

*N.D. Sundaravadivelu.*

- Ancient literature in Tamil provides useful data for an inquiry into the origins of the sociological developments of education within a cultural complex. It is a very valuable corpus for the study of ancient India, because, unlike the Sanskrit and Pali literatures, which are predominantly priestly and monastic literatures, ancient Tamil literature is predominantly secular. Its value to the understanding of the 'non-Aryan' life of ancient India is all the more enhanced since none of the other languages of South India and Sri Lanka have literatures which are so ancient or so independent of Aryan influence.

*Thaninagarajan, Sri Lanka.*

- The Tiru Kural is classified among the didactic works of the Sangam age. It is variously dated from 3rd B.C. to 2nd A.D. It is considered a work of ethics par excellence. If ethics is the science of living, then the Kural is the undying classic on the subject.

*Dr.B.Natarajan*

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## The evolution of the Tamil Script

● Tiruvalluvar preached and propagated moral values as the basis of a stable society. His teachings transcend barriers of religion, class language, time or space. What is marvellous about his writings is the direct appeal to the heart and rational conviction of the mind.

The Kural is the masterpiece of Tamil literature- one of the highest and purest expressions of human thought.

**Prof. Indrani Manian**



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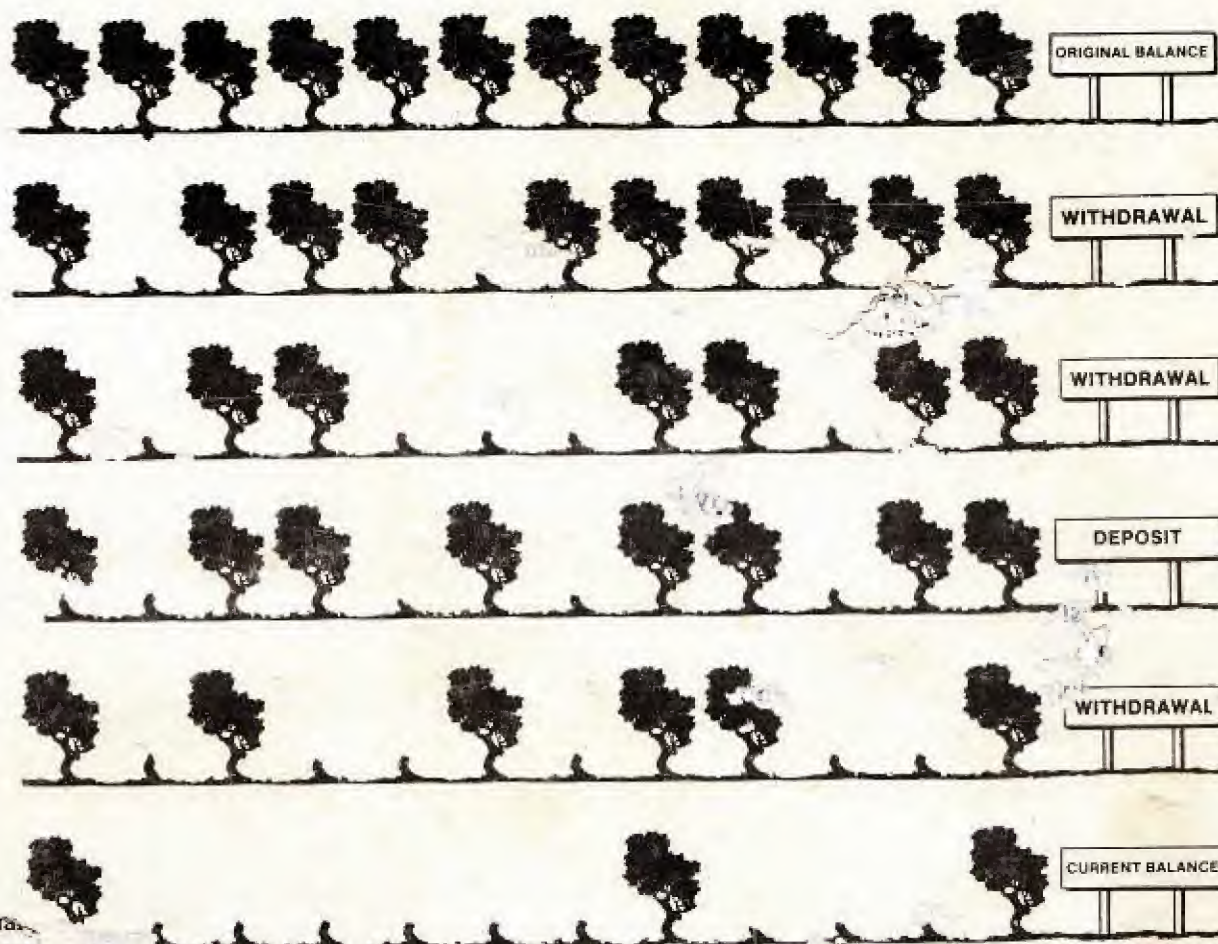
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